

# KEVIN SMITH

## batman: cacophony



WALT FLANAGAN  
SANDRA HOPE









# batman::cacophony

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WALT FLANAGAN

*penciller*

SANDRA HOPE

*inker*

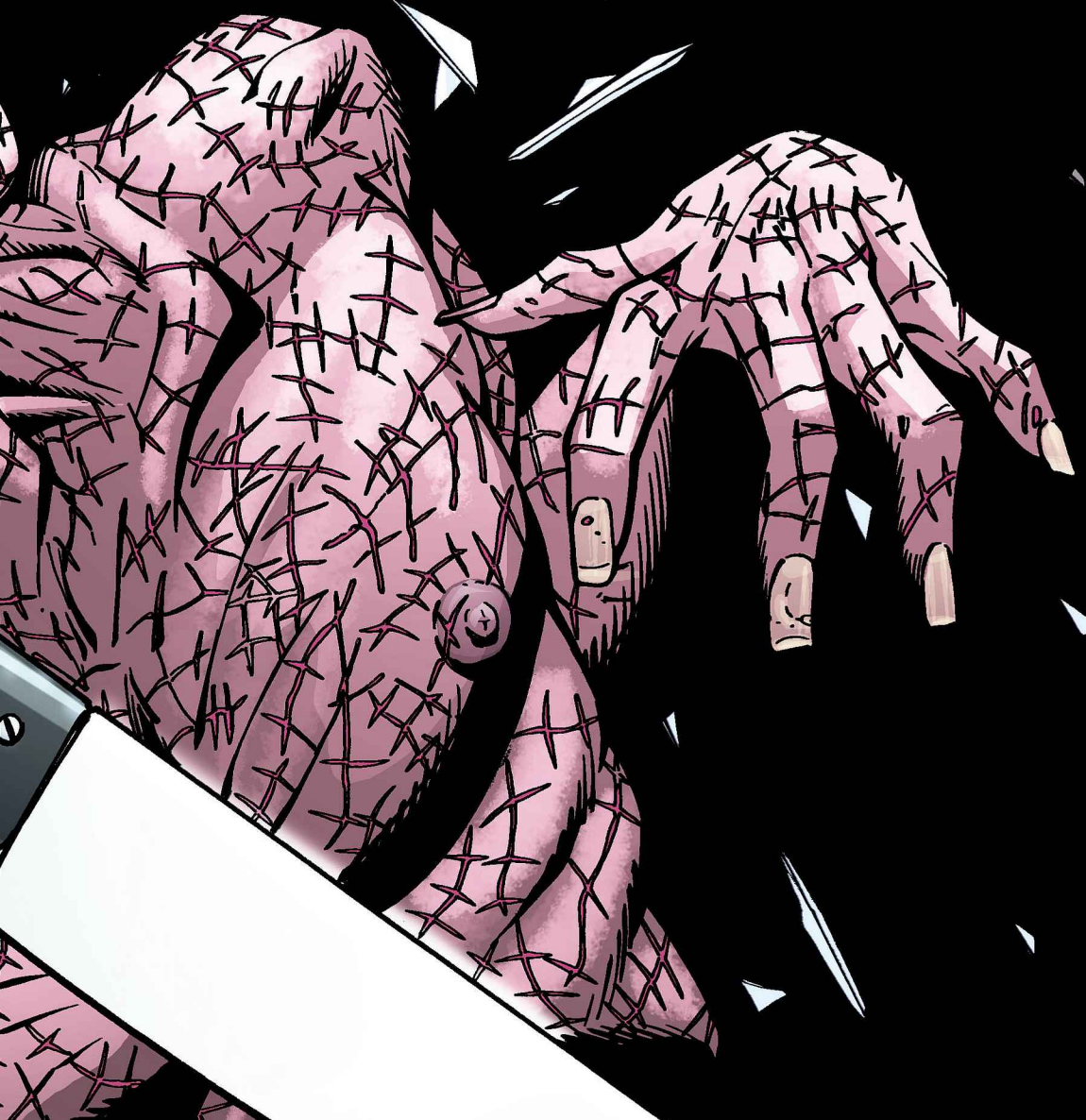
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*colorist*

JARED K. FLETCHER

*letterer*

BATMAN *created by Bob Kane*







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BATMAN: CACOPHONY

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## introduction by KEVIN SMITH

**T**o address the elephant in the room, yes — Walt got the job because he's my friend. And, yes — it's unseemly and unprofessional to trade in such naked nepotism; so much so that a base-coach from the *other* team insinuated that I bullied DC editorial into giving my guy the job.

I mean, sure — that's *one* way to look at it. Or you can view it through *this* prism: without Walt, not only would "Cacophony" not exist, I'd have likely never read any comics beyond *Sad Sack* or *Hot Stuff the L'il Devil*.

Walt Flanagan was my comics guru. Circa 1989, we worked together at the Highlands Recreation Center for a year, during which time he'd loan me copies of *THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS*, *WATCHMEN* and *Mage*.

It was an age of wonders. We'd spend weekends going to Fred Greenberg's NY comic book shows at the Penn Hotel, cherry picking the wall books and discount boxes 'til dusk — at which point, we two suburbanite lads would scamper back home to Monmouth County, where nobody's ever been mugged. When there wasn't a weekend show to hit, we'd drive from one end of Jersey to the other with a phone book, tracking down hole-in-the-wall hobby shops, hoping to find still-racked, first printings of *THE KILLING JOKE* (re: phonebook — mind you, this is in the pre-internet, pre-GPS, nearly-crustacean era).

Walt Flanagan always liked to draw. He had a penchant for drawing Metal-influenced zombies.

During those many hours on toll roads, we'd talk about the story arcs and specific issues we loved, and — like all comic fans — how we would've improved plot points or dialogue with our fan-

boy attention to detail and love of continuity. And after all that unwitting training, a decade or so later, I was actually writing for those very DC characters I'd rhapsodized about with Walt while trekking up and down the state, looking for new wall books at old rack prices.

No slouch himself, Walt had teamed up with his cinematic and real world best-y, Bryan Johnson, to create both *Karney* and *War of the Undead* for IDW. The most involvement I had with either mini was an intro I did for the *Karney* trade.

So there we were: two comics-lovin' dudes from the Jersey 'burbs who both fulfilled dreams of making funny books.

But we'd never done it *together* (y'know, a comic book; not "whoopee").

And that's what I was thinking when I saw the "Dark Knight" billboard.

Oh, I was always a Batman fan: from a childhood of afternoons spent watching Adam West "Batman" reruns when school let out, to Tim Burton's groundbreaking film in '89, to everything Marshall Rogers and Frank Miller had ever done that featured the cowed crusader. But the teaser trailers for Nolan's flick? The billboards? It reignited my Bat-thusiasm. I fell in love all over again.

Confession time: I haven't read weekly new books in over five years. I fell behind in my reading, then fell even further behind, then stopped reading altogether. Walt would keep me updated as to what was happening in the various plotlines of the many titles I used to regularly read. I'd long since lost the desire to write



comics — largely because I'd become *persona non grata* in the comics community, due to my incessant lateness. But looking up at that billboard? I became very interested in Batman again. And the more I stared at the billboard, the more I "saw" Walt's name.

Here was one of my closest friends in the world — the guy responsible for my four-color enthusiasm — drawing comics. Here was me, wanting to write some comics. And neither of us were getting any younger.

So I called Dan DiDio, who I'd met many years prior, and asked him if I could write a Batman mini and have my longtime friend draw it. Dan understood immediately that my passion for the project was being fueled by the desire to bring my comics interest full circle: create a miniseries *with* my comics-brother-from-another-mother handling the art chores.

And man, was it fun for us — not to mention a dream come true.

Fun and educational, actually. I banged out the first two scripts in a week, but it wasn't until issue one streeted that I did a second draft — all thanks to a CACOPHONY review in which a critic pointed out that some of the dialogue I'd given Batman didn't sound natural in the least when spoken aloud. I gave it a test run and the blogger was absolutely correct: I'd gotten too showy with the word balloons. So I re-drafted all the dialogue for the next two issues, scraping away the excess verbiage, and boiling each sentiment down to the same Bat-time (same Bat-channel).

On the art front, Walt would draw a rough of the page. If necessary, I'd ask for tweaks, then he'd take it to full pencils. And over the course of three issues, both of us got better at creating a comic book. The writing improved from issue one to issue three, and the art followed suit (indeed, peep out the "Fountainhead" reading sequences in issue one and three; they look like they were drawn by two different artists entirely).

So for those who'd snark about me getting my friend a job: you've got it all wrong. Scrape away everything else, and you'll see that *I'M* the friend who benefited from nepotism; because if it weren't for Walt Flanagan, I wouldn't have this gig. Walt is Batman himself — and me? I've always been nothing more than a fat-and-flabby, immature, over-eager Robin.

But to be fair, once we got the approval from Dan and DC, I started thinking about how I'd written Batman into a bit of my GREEN ARROW run, yet said in many an interview, "I don't wanna write a Batman story ever; it's fun to use him as a supporting player instead." What a stupid thing to say. Why limit yourself when it came to the single most interesting superhero ever created? Why not try to write the best Batman story you could?

No — that's *not* CACOPHONY.

By series' end, I realized it wasn't the best Batman story I could write; nor was it Walt's finest hour. By the time we were finished, I saw CACOPHONY for what it was: a dress rehearsal for the best Batman story I could write/ Walt could draw. It was a warm-up. Quentin Tarantino (yeah, I'm dropping names) once told me that he wanted to do another martial arts flick after the *Kill Bill* films because by the time those flicks were done, he'd learned how to do it. His logic was "Now I've got all this expertise in the field. Why not put it to use immediately?"

So the three issues of CACOPHONY gave birth to a twelve-issue maxi-series that Walt and I are working on now, for release this fall. Entitled BATMAN: THE WIDENING GYRE, it is, for sure, the *best* Batman story either of us can do.

Meantime, 'til that hits the stands? Please enjoy the *second-best* Batman story me and Walt could tell.

*Kevin Smith*

6/22/09



batman::cacophony #1 cover by ADAM KUBERT









THE ARKHAM ASYLUM FOR  
THE CRIMINALLY INSANE.

FOLLOWING THE RECENT  
NATIONWIDE ECONOMIC CRASH,  
AS A COST-CUTTING MEASURE,  
THE BOARD OPTED TO  
DISCONTINUE SECURITY GUARDS  
AT THE FRONT GATE.




THE RATIONALE WAS THAT  
NOBODY EVER WANTS TO  
BREAK IN TO ARKHAM.

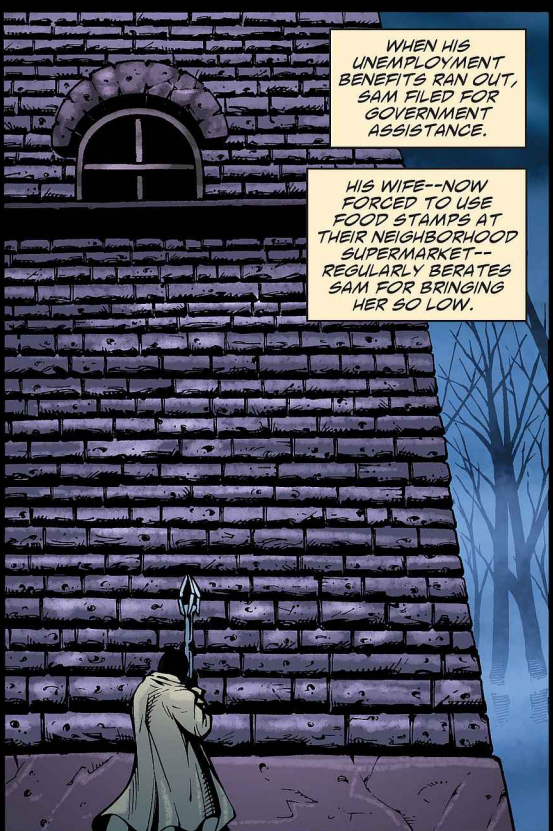


THE BOARD DIVVIED UP THE SIXTY  
THOUSAND DOLLAR SAVINGS AMONG  
THEMSELVES IN YEAR-END BONUSES.




A black and white comic panel showing two men in trench coats standing on a rooftop. The man on the left is looking down at something in his hands, while the man on the right stands slightly behind him. The rooftop is made of dark, textured tiles, and there are arched windows in the background.

LONGTIME FRONT GATE  
GUARDS SAM JENNINGS  
AND ROY KELLY WERE  
FORCED TO LOOK FOR  
WORK IN A JOB MARKET  
THAT HAS LITTLE USE FOR  
EMPLOYEES OVER FIFTY.

A black and white comic panel showing a man in a trench coat standing on a rooftop. He is looking down at something in his hands. The rooftop is made of dark, textured tiles, and there are arched windows in the background.

WHEN HIS  
UNEMPLOYMENT  
BENEFITS RAN OUT,  
SAM FILED FOR  
GOVERNMENT  
ASSISTANCE.

HIS WIFE--NOW  
FORCED TO USE  
FOOD STAMPS AT  
THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD  
SUPERMARKET--  
REGULARLY BERATES  
SAM FOR BRINGING  
HER SO LOW.

A black and white comic panel showing a man in a trench coat standing on a rooftop. He is holding a flaming torch that is emitting a large flame. The rooftop is made of dark, textured tiles, and there are arched windows in the background.

ROY, HOWEVER--ALWAYS  
THE MORE INDUSTRIOUS  
OF THE TWO--TOOK OUT  
AN AD IN THE GOTHAM  
GAZETTE'S PERSONALS  
SECTION THAT RAN EVERY  
DAY FOR TWO MONTHS.

"FORMER ARKHAM  
SECURITY GUARD SEEKS  
EMPLOYMENT OR OTHER"  
THE LISTING READ.

"THIRTY YEARS' EXPERIENCE  
IN THE WORLD'S MOST  
DANGEROUS AND SECURE  
PENAL INSTITUTION. INQUIRIES  
CONTACT BOX 1145"

PAF!



LAST WEEK, HE FINALLY GOT THE CALL HE'D HOPED WOULD EVENTUALLY COME.



TWO DAYS AGO, ROY SOLD THIRTY YEARS' WORTH OF ARKHAM ACCESS CODES, SHIFT DETAILS, FLOOR PLANS, AND VARIOUS OTHER INSIDER KNOWLEDGE OF THE ASYLUM FOR TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS.



ROY USED HIS EARNINGS TO MOVE TO BAJA, MEXICO.



HE PLANS TO OPEN A BEACH-FRONT MOPED RENTAL OPERATION AND SPEND THE PROFITS ON BOOZE AND LOOSE WOMEN FOR THE REMAINDER OF HIS DAYS.







JOKER.

IF I'D KNOWN YOU WERE COMING, I'D'VE DONE MY HAIR. OR AT LEAST PUT ON MY MERKIN.

I'VE GOT A GREEN ONE, NATCH. THE CURTAINS HAVE TO MATCH THE DRAPES, AS THEY SAY.

HEH.

THEY'VE GOT YOU LOCKED UP GOOD AND TIGHT, HUH?

THIS IS THE SAME STUFF THEY MADE THE POPE-MOBILE OUT OF, I'M TOLD--ONLY THICKER.

I MISS THE BARS. BUT THROW ONE MEASLY PIECE OF POO AT A GUARD, AND SUDDENLY IT'S ALL BULLET-PROOF GLASS FOR OUR HERO.

'COURSE, THE POO DID HAVE RAZOR BLADES IN IT, BUT STILL.

TO WHAT DO I OWE THE PLEASURE OF THIS LATE-NIGHT POP-IN?





I'M  
HERE TO  
KILL YOU,  
LAUGHING-  
BOY.

HUH.

WELL,  
THAT'LL SAVE  
ME FROM HAVING TO  
FINISH THIS KNEE-  
SLAPPER.



THAT'S ONE  
OF MY  
FAVORITES.

I DON'T  
DOUBT IT.

LOOK, FLOYD--  
I HATE TO BE THAT  
GUY AND ALL, BUT YOU  
MIND SHARING THE  
REASON YOU WANNA  
DO ME DIRTY?

IT'S NOTHING  
PERSONAL. GOT A CALL  
TWO WEEKS AGO FROM A  
PARENT WHOSE KID YOU  
KILLED, LOOKING FOR  
SOME PAYBACK.

AT FIRST,  
I WAS ALL SET  
TO TURN HIM DOWN,  
CONSIDERING YOU'RE A  
PRETTY HARD MARK  
TO REACH.

BUT I'VE  
GOT A SOFT SPOT  
FOR THE PARENTS OF  
MURDERED CHILDREN--  
BEING ONE M'SELF--SO I  
TOOK THE COMMISSION.  
EVEN GAVE HIM A  
DISCOUNT RATE.

SO I GUESS  
IT IS KINDA  
PERSONAL.



YOU'RE THE PROVERBIAL  
WHORE-WITH-A-HEART-  
O'-GOLD, FLOYD.

YOU DO KNOW  
THAT I RARELY KILL  
CHILDREN, RIGHT?

THIS WASN'T  
A KID-KID. HIGH  
SCHOOLER. GOT  
TWEAKED OUT ON  
"CHUCKLES" AND THREW  
HIMSELF OFF THE  
CAFETERIA ROOF  
DURING LUNCH.

KID WENT  
FROM BROWN-  
BAGGIN' IT TO  
BODY-BAGGIN'  
IT, HUH? NICE.

BUT, PRAY  
TELL: WHAT'S  
"CHUCKLES"?

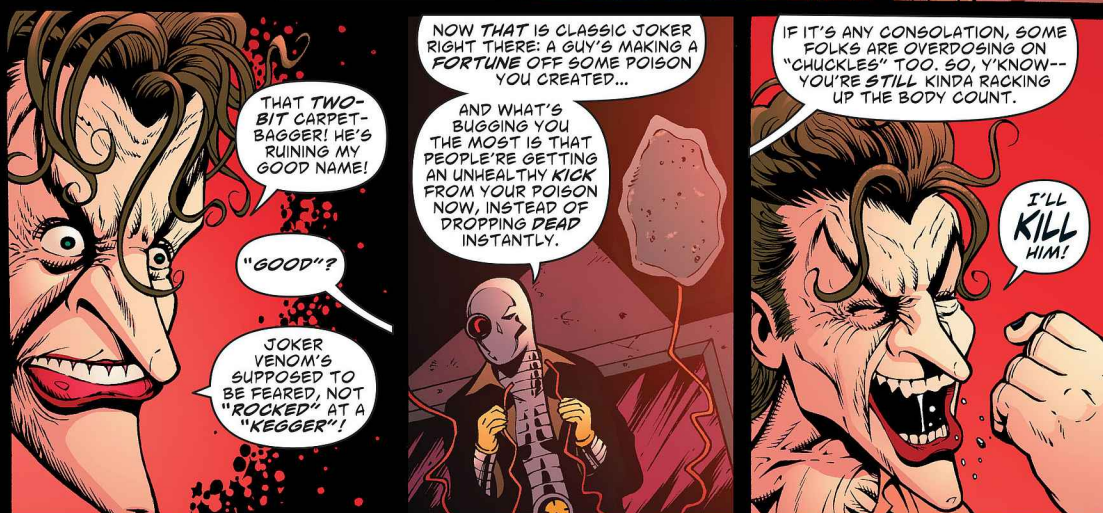
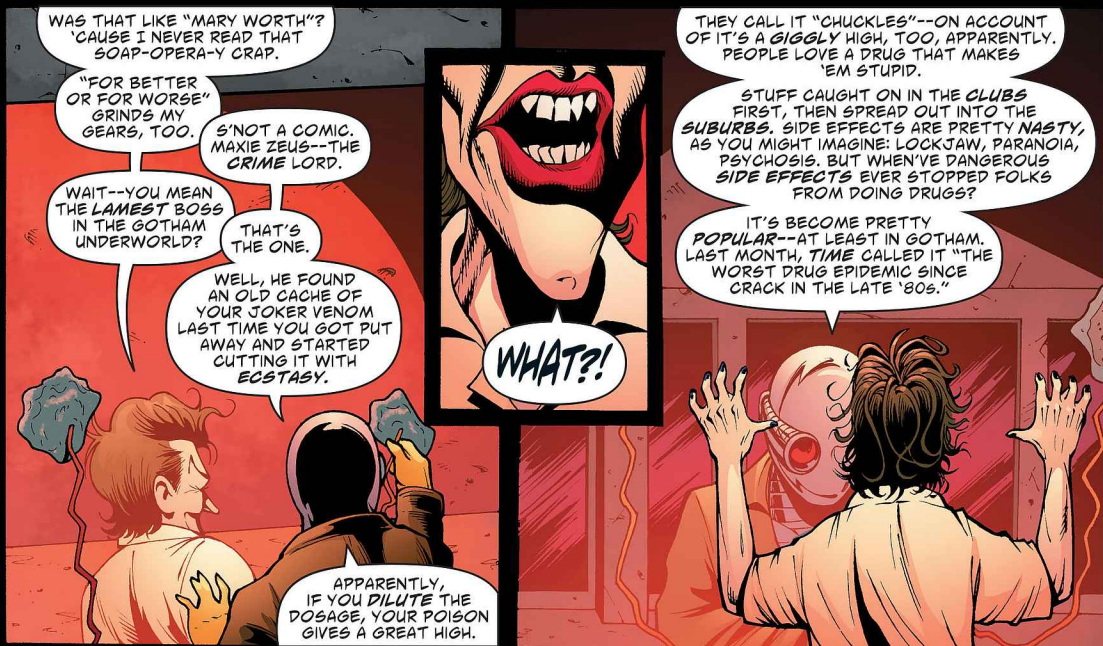
THEY DON'T  
LET YOU READ  
THE PAPERS  
IN HERE?

JUST THE  
COMICS SECTION.  
EXCEPT "FAMILY CIRCUS."  
THEY TAKE THAT STRIP  
OUT 'CAUSE IT TENDS TO  
RILE UP SOME OF THE  
MORE...TOUCHY  
INMATES.

THE  
ONES THAT  
LIKE TO TOUCH  
CHILDREN, I  
MEAN.

YOU  
REMEMBER  
MAXIE ZEUS?











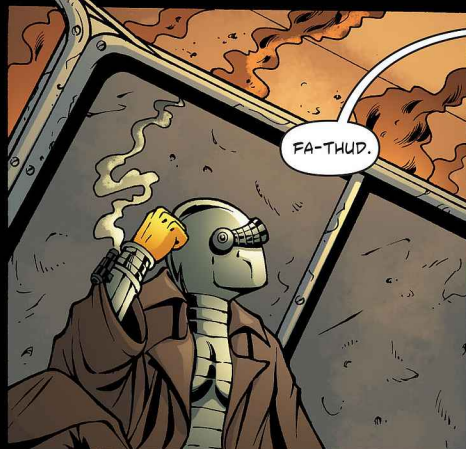
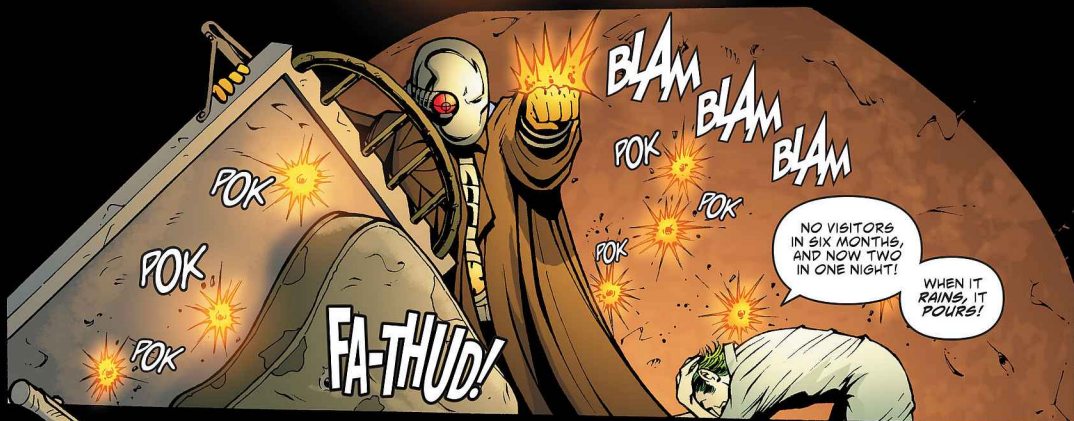


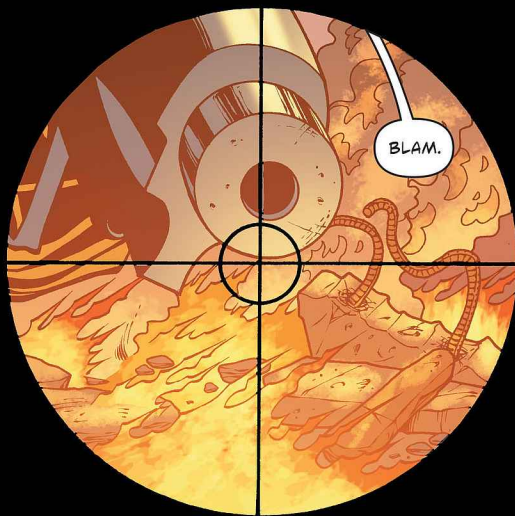
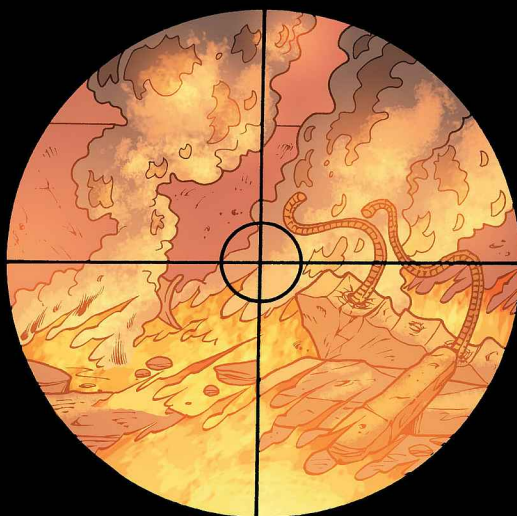




FWUSHHHH.



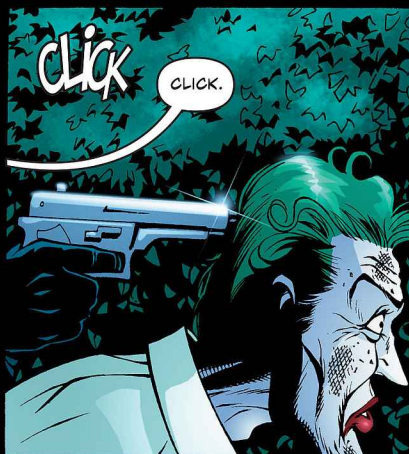
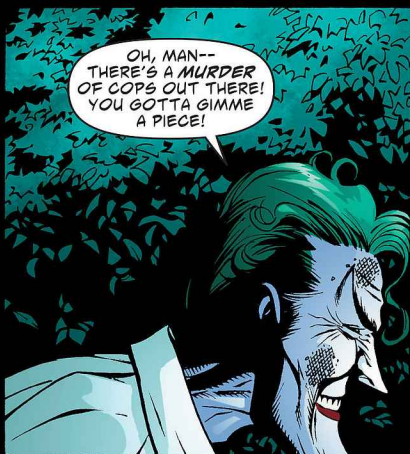




















JUST DO ME A FAVOR  
AND DON'T EVER  
TELL TETCH.

SHHHHHH...

THAT  
MIDGET'S BEEN  
TRYING TO GET  
ME TO DO THIS  
FOR YEARS NOW,  
AND I TOLD HIM  
I DON'T SWING  
THAT...



HUH?

HEY!  
WHERE'D  
YOU GO?!



SEDUCED AND  
ABANDONED.



"I FEEL SO  
DIRTY..."

SO FILTHY SICK  
AND DIRTY...



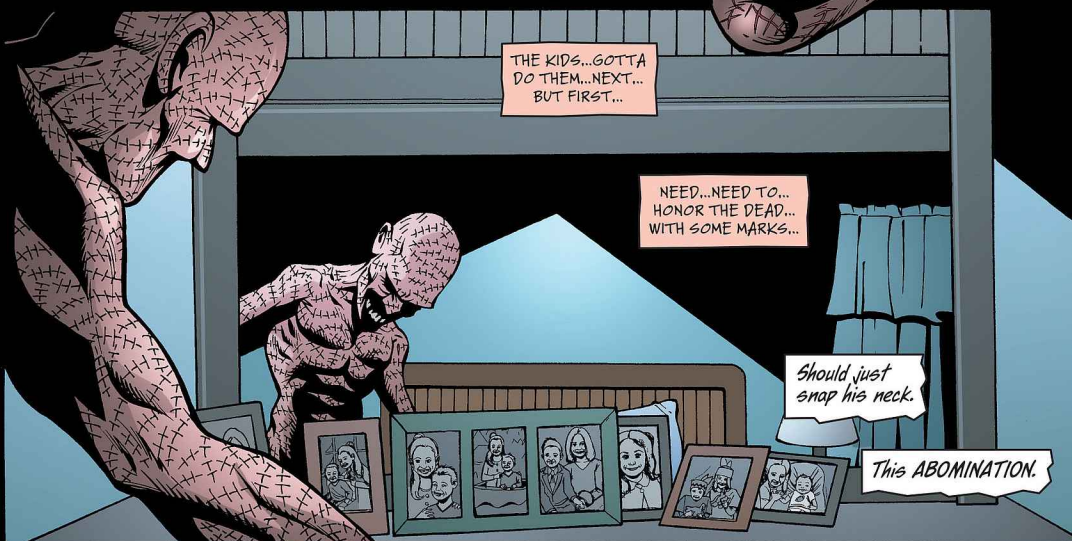
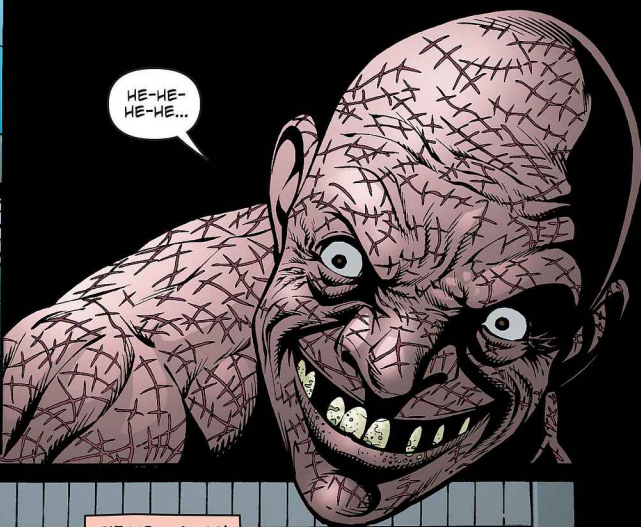
PURITY FROM RELEASE  
OF BAN ALL LIVES THEY  
SHOULD BE THANKING ME  
NOT JUDGING ME WITH  
THEIR CLERGY EYES...

CAN'T CLEANSE THEIR  
SIN WITHOUT THE  
GLASSES ANYMORE THE  
GLASSES SO I CAN SEE  
MYSELF REFLECTED IN  
THEIR ARTIFICIAL GAZES...

BEGGING ME TO  
BAPTISE THEM  
ANEW IN THE  
LITURGY OF THE KNIFE  
AND BLOOD...









Instead, I crash  
Zeas's unholy  
briss.

Baruch haba,  
SCUMBAG.

SKKRRKSSH

AAAAHHHHH!







Of all the lunatics  
I spend my life  
putting down...

SWISHHHH!

This one I  
hate the most.



I AM CHARON,  
THE FERRYMAN!  
I AM MICHAEL, THE  
ARCHANGEL! I AM  
SHIVA, THE GOD  
OF DEATH! I AM  
SAMHAIN!



SHUT  
THE HELL  
UP...



KRAK



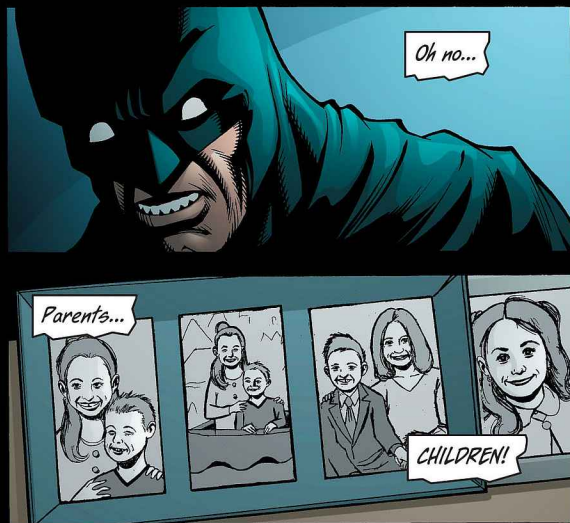
KEKRAASH



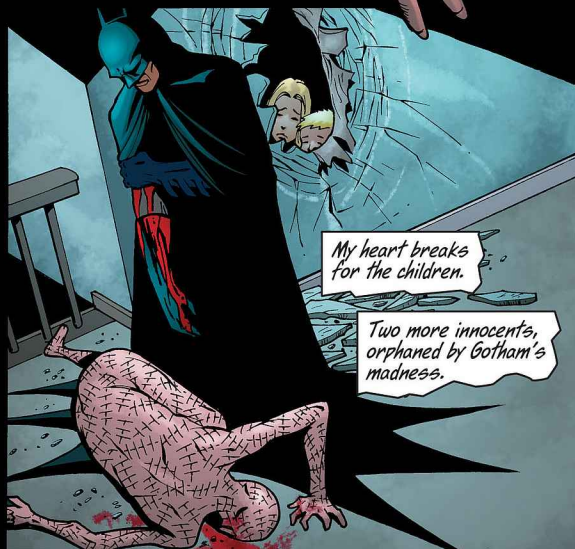
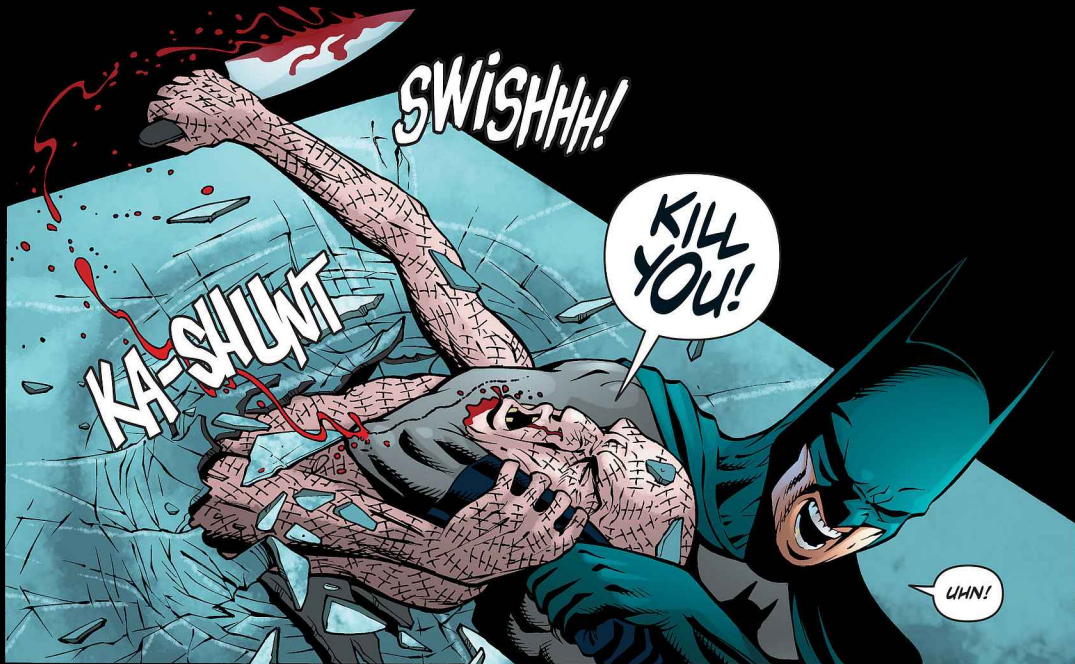
Too late,  
yet again.

I offer a silent apology  
to the victims I failed  
to protect from  
another madman.













The monster can't hurt you now.

COMING THROUGH!  
MAKE A HOLE!



ZSASZ IS RESTRAINED  
ON THE SECOND FLOOR.  
HE'LL REQUIRE MEDICAL  
ATTENTION.

SEE THAT  
HE DOESN'T  
GET IT FOR AT  
LEAST AN  
HOUR.



THE COMMISSIONER'S  
LOOKING FOR  
YOU, SIR.

HE SAID  
TO TELL  
YOU...

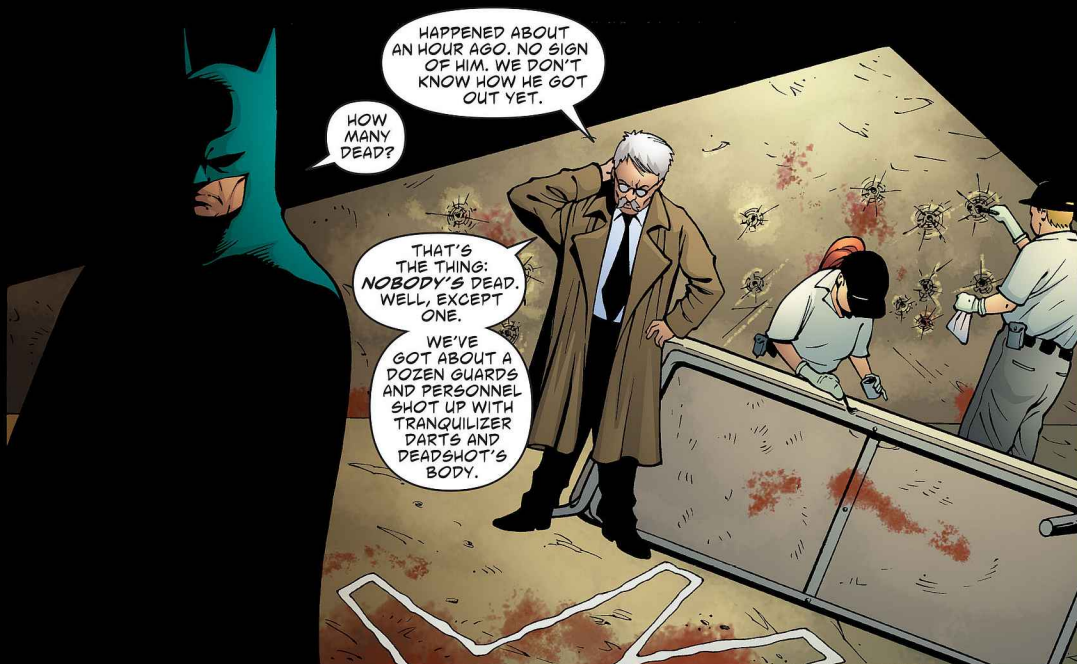


"CODE  
GREEN."



Not AGAIN.



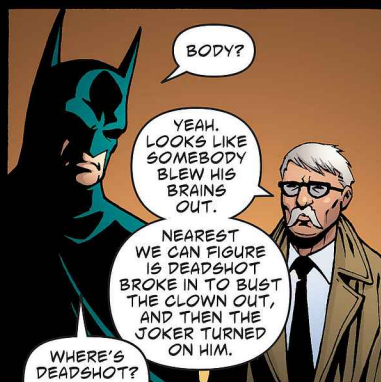


HAPPENED ABOUT AN HOUR AGO. NO SIGN OF HIM. WE DON'T KNOW HOW HE GOT OUT YET.

HOW MANY DEAD?

THAT'S THE THING: NOBODY'S DEAD. WELL, EXCEPT ONE.

WE'VE GOT ABOUT A DOZEN GUARDS AND PERSONNEL SHOT UP WITH TRANQUILIZER DARTS AND DEADSHOT'S BODY.



BODY?

YEAH. LOOKS LIKE SOMEBODY BLEW HIS BRAINS OUT.

NEAREST WE CAN FIGURE IS DEADSHOT BROKE IN TO BUST THE CLOWN OUT, AND THEN THE JOKER TURNED ON HIM.

WHERE'S DEADSHOT?



"THEY JUST LOADED HIM INTO THE MEAT WAGON. M.E. TRIED TO GET HIS OUTFIT OFF HIM, BUT IT'S RIGGED WITH SOME KINDA SEALANT."



"THEY'RE GONNA TRY TO CUT HIM OUT OF HIS COSTUME AT THE MORGUE FOR THE AUTOPSY."



Zzzzz



Zzzzip



UHN...

LAWTON.





AHHH!



YOU SPOOKY ---!

LOOKING FOR THESE?

NOW UNLOCK YOUR MASK BEFORE I BEAT YOU INTO A COMA.

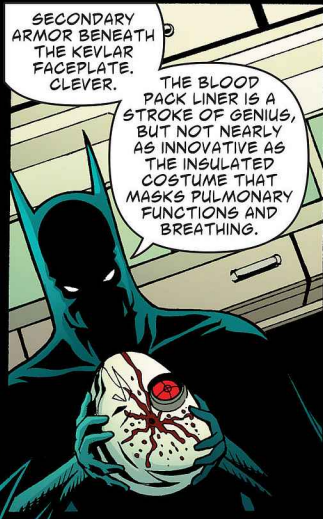


click

SIGH



BITE-ACTIVATED LOCKING MECHANISM. INTERESTING.



SECONDARY ARMOR BENEATH THE KEVLAR FACEPLATE. CLEVER.

THE BLOOD PACK LINER IS A STROKE OF GENIUS, BUT NOT NEARLY AS INNOVATIVE AS THE INSULATED COSTUME THAT MASKS PULMONARY FUNCTIONS AND BREATHING.



ALL DESIGNED SO YOU CAN PLAY POSSUM IF YOU'RE SHOT.

SCORE ANOTHER ONE FOR THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE.

YOU GOT A CIGARETTE?



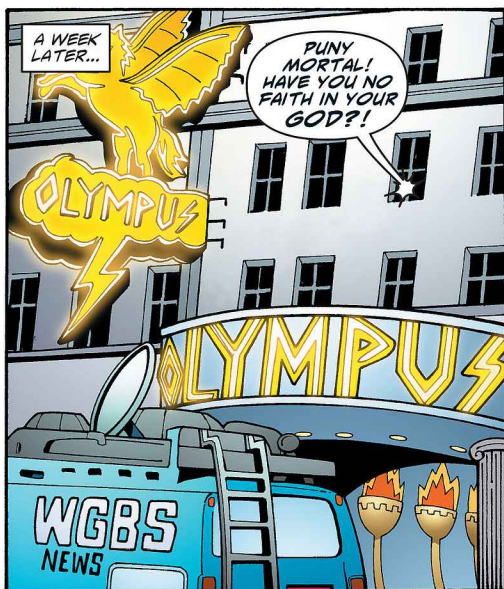
WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO, LAWTON?! WHY DID YOU BREAK THE JOKER OUT OF ARKHAM?!

I WASN'T THERE TO BREAK HIM OUT, I SWEAR! I WAS HIRED TO KILL HIM BY THE FATHER OF SOME KID WHO O.D.'ED ON "CHUCKLES"! THEN THIS OTHER GUY SHOWED UP AND STARTED SHOOTING AT ME!









A WEEK LATER...

PUNY MORTAL! HAVE YOU NO FAITH IN YOUR GOD?!



BEHOLD THE DIVINE POWER OF THE MIGHTY ZEUS!



IS THIS YOUR CARD?



THAT WAS MY CARD!

HA-HA. AND THAT'S ABOUT THE EXTENT OF MY "GODLY POWERS" NOW.

SO WE'VE SEEN THE END OF THE TOGA-WEARING MAXIE ZEUS THEN?

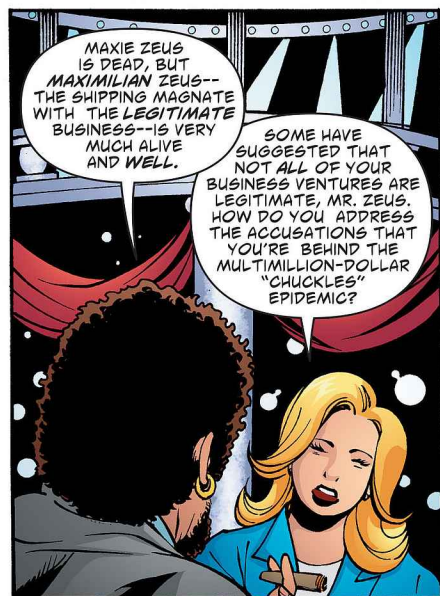
OH, YES. NO MORE SANDALS FOR ME. IT'S ONLY EIGHTEEN HUNDRED DOLLAR BERLUTIS FROM HERE ON OUT.



LOOK, I GET IT: I'VE HAD SOME PRETTY PUBLIC EXTENDED PSYCHOLOGICAL BREAK-DOWNS. I CAN'T HIDE FROM THE FACT THAT EVERY NEWS STATION IN TOWN HAS FOOTAGE OF ME RUNNING AROUND LOOKING LIKE BRAD PITT IN "TROY".

BUT THAT'S ALL BEHIND ME NOW. TWO YEARS AGO, I FINALLY GOT THE HELP I NEEDED. I'M ON PRESCRIBED MEDICATION TO STABILIZE MY DIAGNOSED BIPOLAR DISORDER. THE DEMENTIA'S GONE, THE ILLUSIONS OF GRANDEUR ARE GONE.

I'VE PAID MY DEBTS TO SOCIETY, SO TO SPEAK, AND NOW I JUST WANNA CONTINUE BUILDING THE COMPANY I LET SLIP AWAY WHILE I WAS BATTLING MENTAL ILLNESS.



MAXIE ZEUS IS DEAD, BUT MAXIMILIAN ZEUS--THE SHIPPING MAGNATE WITH THE LEGITIMATE BUSINESS--IS VERY MUCH ALIVE AND WELL.

SOME HAVE SUGGESTED THAT NOT ALL OF YOUR BUSINESS VENTURES ARE LEGITIMATE, MR. ZEUS. HOW DO YOU ADDRESS THE ACCUSATIONS THAT YOU'RE BEHIND THE MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR "CHUCKLES" EPIDEMIC?

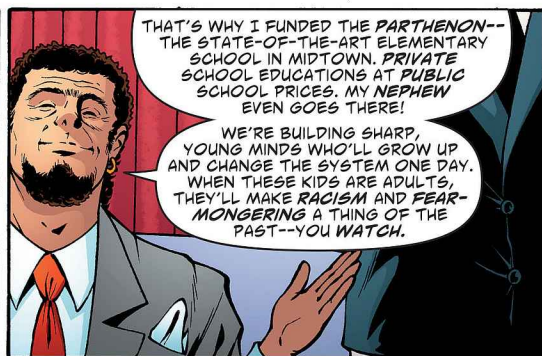
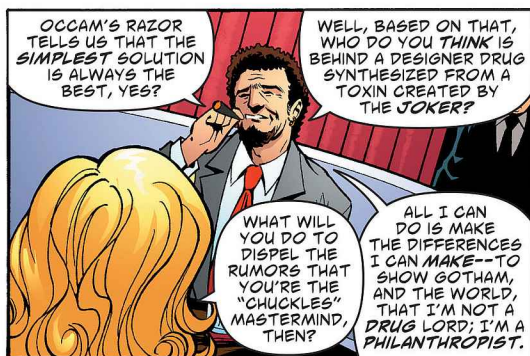


I THINK IT'S TRAGIC THAT IN THIS, THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, THERE'S STILL RAMPANT ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION. I'M A GREEK--A FOREIGNER--SO NATURALLY, I MUST BE UP TO NO GOOD.

AS LONG AS OLD WHITE MEN RUN THIS COUNTRY, THE POLITICIANS AND THE MEDIA WILL ALWAYS OFFER UP A BOGEYMAN WITH AN ACCENT OR A DARKER SKIN TONE AS THE SCAPEGOAT FOR EVERY PROBLEM THEY CAN'T OR WON'T FIX THEMSELVES.

THEY FOSTER MISTRUST AND HATRED, RATHER THAN UNITY, BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO FUEL FEAR, YOU SEE--SO THEY CAN KEEP ALL OF US FROM ADDRESSING THE REAL PROBLEMS AT THE VOTING BOOTHS.

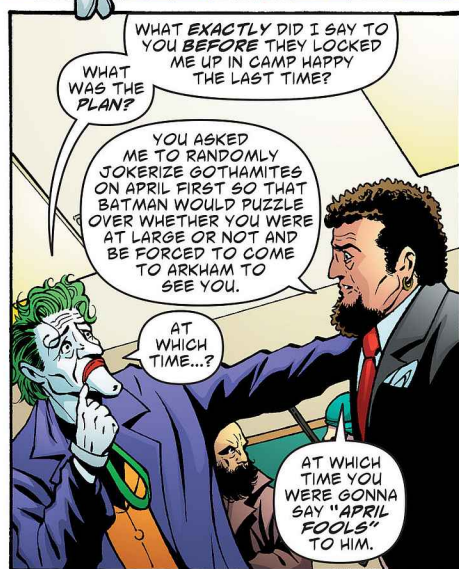
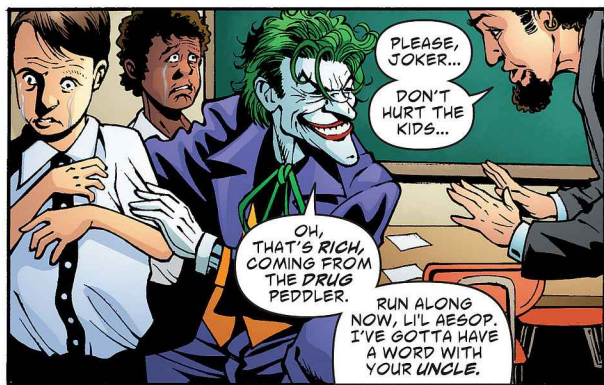




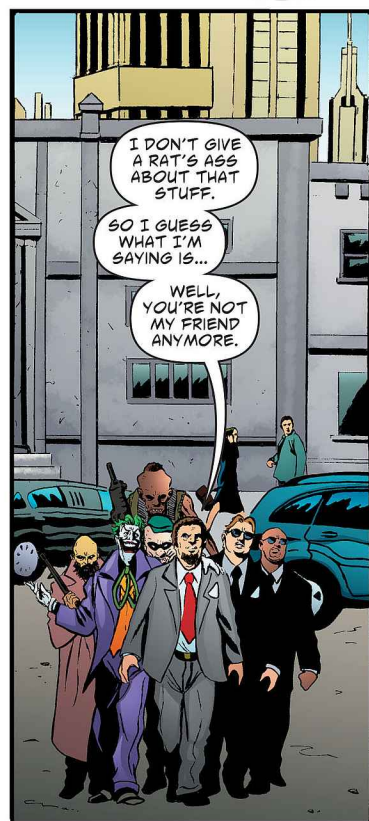
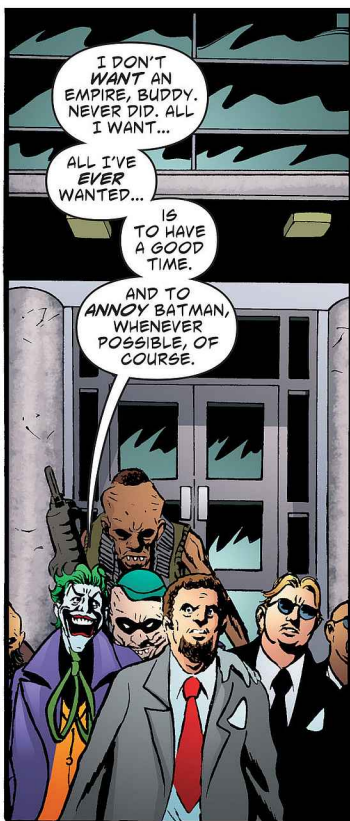


























AS IN EVERY MAJOR CITY, FRIDAY NIGHTS IN GOTHAM BELONG TO THE CLUB CROWD.



EVEN IN THE MIST OF A CITYWIDE GANG WAR BETWEEN THIS CLUB'S OWNER--MAXIE ZEUS--AND THE URBAN TERRORIST KNOWN ONLY AS THE JOKER, GOTHAMITES SHRUG OFF ANY POSSIBLE THREAT TO THEIR WELL-BEING IN FAVOR OF SURRENDERING TO THE LESSER NATURE OF THEIR ANGELS.

COCAINE AND SPEED FIND NO TAKERS IN CLUB OLYMPUS LATELY. "CHUCKLES"--THE METHAMPHETAMINE DERIVED FROM THE JOKER'S OWN "VENOM"--RULES THE DAY.

THAT IT'S MANUFACTURED AND DISTRIBUTED BY THE CLUB'S OWNER DOESN'T DICTATE THE DEMAND; GOTHAM IS IN THE THROES OF A LOVE AFFAIR WITH "CHUCKLES."

BUT IT'S NOT JUST "CHUCKLES" THAT'S DRAWING THE CROWD TONIGHT. WORLD-RENOWNED DJ MITE IS BACK IN TOWN AFTER A MASSIVE EUROPEAN TOUR.

AND GOTHAM WILL ALWAYS CELEBRATE ITS OWN...

ESPECIALLY IF THEY DROP THE PHAT BEATS AND SPORT A GIMMICKY COSTUME.

WHAT THE ADORING, INEBRIATED CROWD DOESN'T KNOW IS THAT DJ MITE'S BODY WAS JUST FOUND IN HIS HOTEL BATHROOM BY A MAID WHO CAME FOR TURN-DOWN SERVICE.

HIS HEAD WAS LOCATED A HALF HOUR LATER BY THE POLICE, STUFFED IN THE MINI-BAR.

click



HA HA HA HA  
HA HA HA HA!

I AM  
PROMETHEUS!

I BRING YOU  
FIRE FROM  
OLYMPUS!

FWOOSH

AHHHHH!





ITE

FWOOSH

NOOOOO!

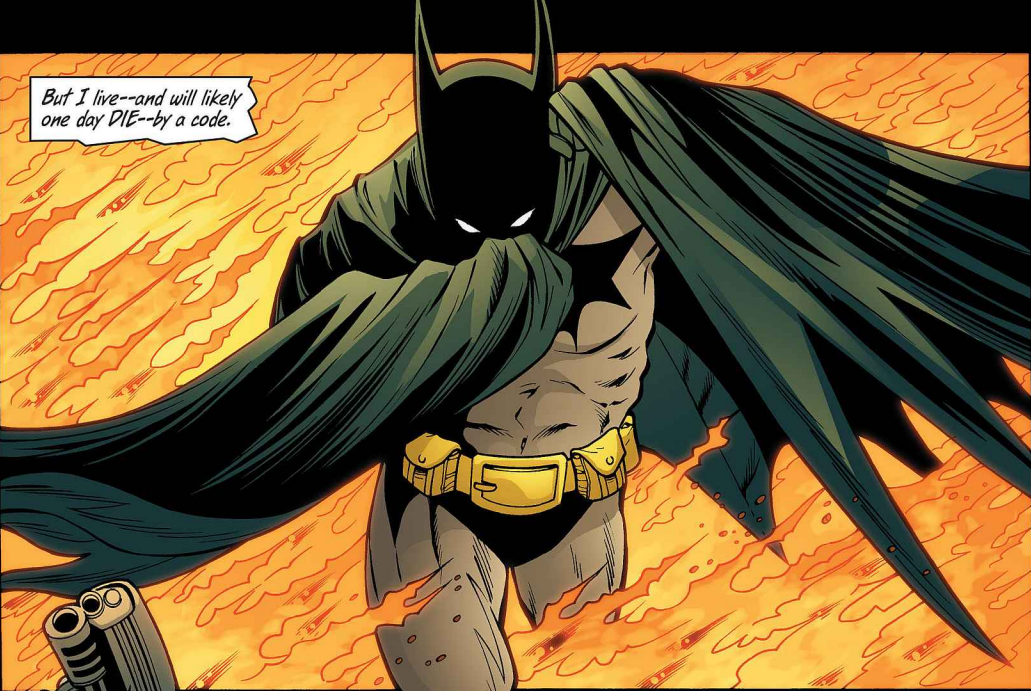
AHHHHH!









A large panel showing Batman floating in the air, surrounded by intense orange and yellow flames. He is wearing his iconic suit and cape, with his eyes visible through the mask. A yellow utility belt is visible around his waist.

*But I live--and will likely  
one day DIE--by a code.*

A medium panel showing Batman holding a man with a beard and a headband. The man has a shocked expression. They are surrounded by flames and debris.

*ONE day...*

A close-up panel of a large, futuristic-looking gun firing a bullet. The gun is dark and metallic, with a large barrel. The background is filled with flames and smoke.

**PAF!**

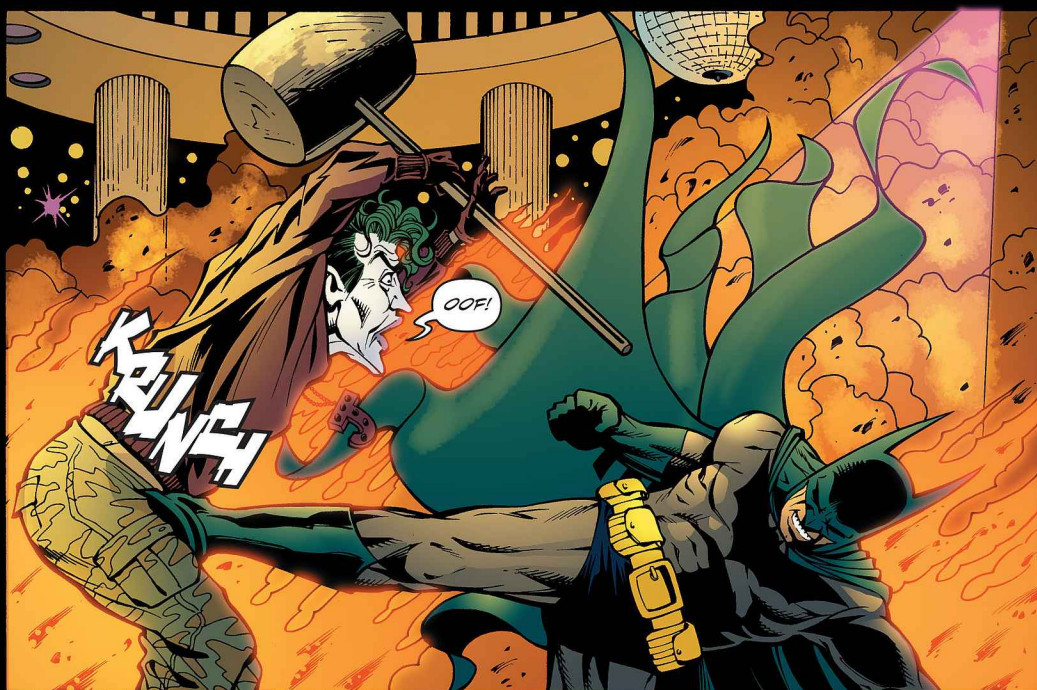
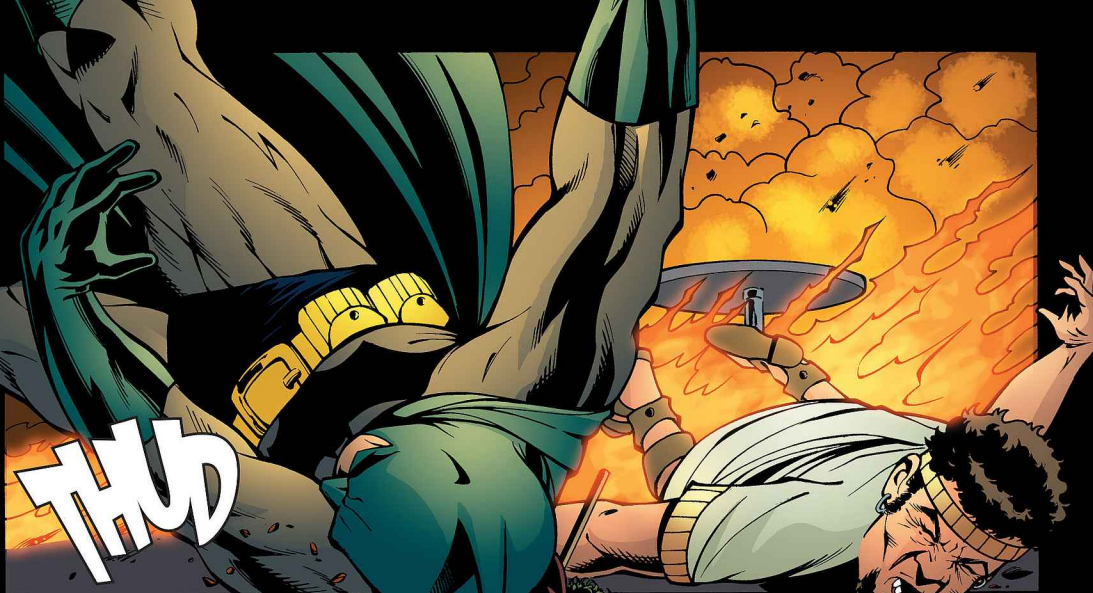
A large panel showing Batman and the man from the previous panels. Batman is holding the man, and they are both surrounded by intense flames and debris. Batman has a determined expression, while the man looks shocked.

*...not TODAY.*









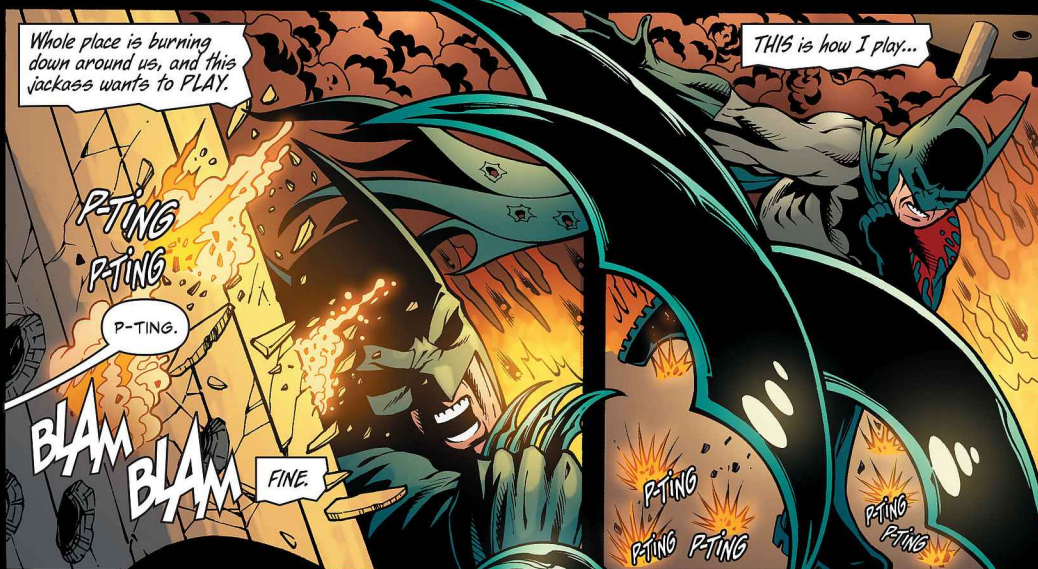
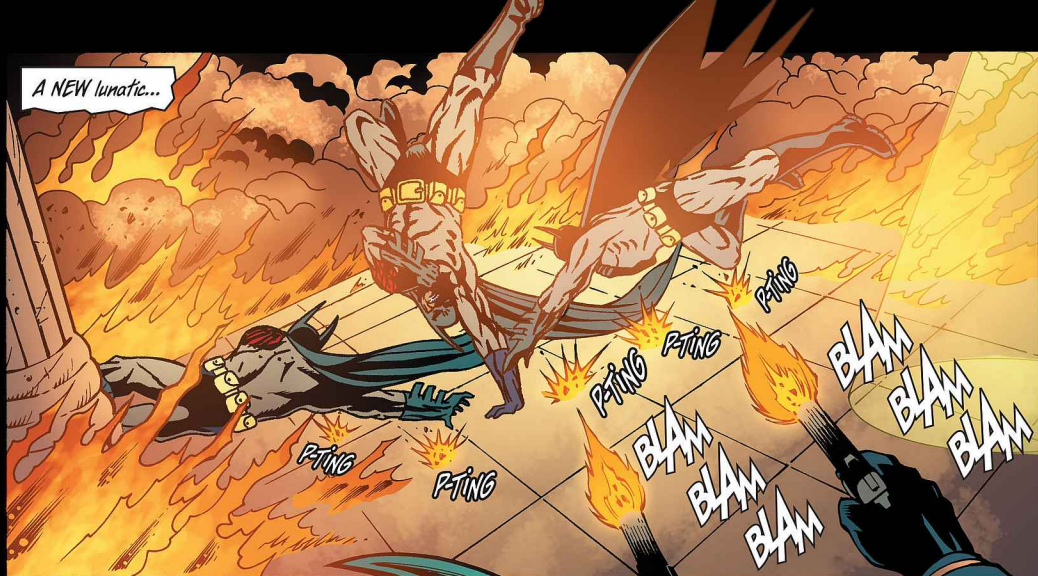








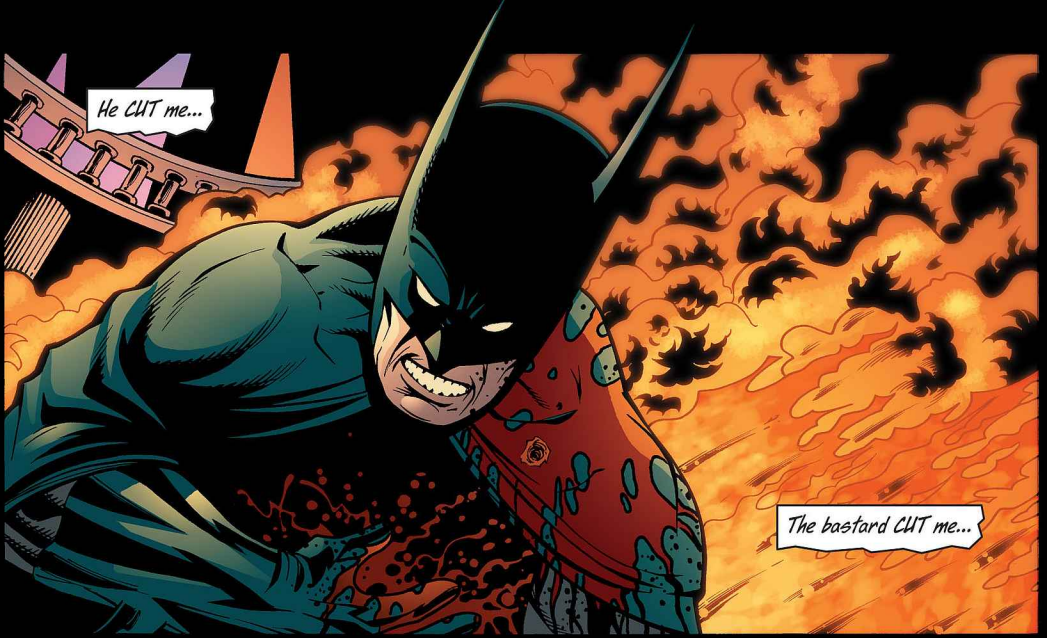




















ANOTHER  
OF GOTHAM'S  
UPSTANDING  
CITIZENS?

THIS ONE'S NOT  
GOTHAM-BASED.  
I DON'T KNOW WHO  
HE IS. ALL I'VE GOT ON  
HIM IS THAT HE TRIED TO  
KILL CONNOR HAWKE,  
THE SECOND GREEN  
ARROW.

FURTHER  
PROOF THAT NO  
LEAGUER SHOULD  
EVER LET SOMEONE  
ELSE ASSUME  
THEIR MANTLE.

I'M SURE  
JEAN PAUL  
VALLEY WOULD  
BE HEARTBROKEN  
TO HEAR YOU SAY  
THAT, SIR.

FUNNY.

HE ALSO KILLED  
TWO LESSER-  
KNOWN VIGILANTES  
IN PENNSYLVANIA.

SO SOMEONE  
HAS A FILE ON HIM,  
THEN, THAT WOULD  
INCLUDE HIS IDENTITY  
OR AT LEAST  
A NAME?

NO--I PUT THAT  
TOGETHER MYSELF,  
WHEN I MATCHED THE  
BALLISTICS IN THE  
KILLINGS OF VIRAGO  
AND BUCKEYE TO THE  
SLUGS THEY PULLED  
FROM CONNOR.

HOW DID  
YOU ACCESS  
THE CONNOR  
HAWKE  
SLUGS?

I LIBERATED  
THEM FROM  
STAR CITY GENERAL  
SHORTLY AFTER  
THE INCIDENT.

YOU MOST  
DEFINITELY  
NEED A HOBBY,  
MASTER  
BRUCE.

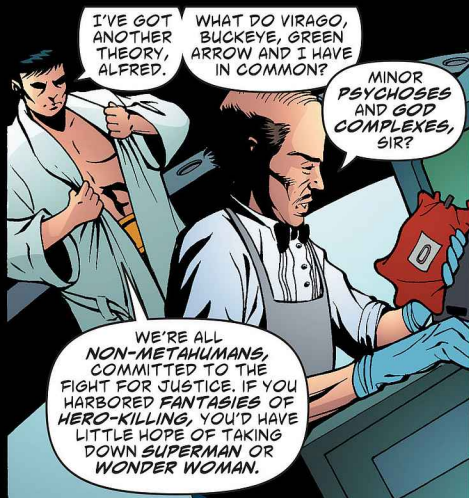




SO WE'RE TO ASSUME, THEN, THAT THE JOKER IS IN **COLLUSION** WITH THIS **HERO-KILLER**?

I'M NOT SURE. WE **COULD** JUST VIEW HIS SUDDEN APPEARANCE AT THE CLUB AS NOTHING MORE THAN FORTUITOUS TIMING FROM WHICH THE JOKER BENEFITED.

BUT IF HE MATCHES THE **DESCRIPTION** DEAD-SHOT GAVE YOU FROM THE ARKHAM BREAK-IN AND HE STOPPED YOU FROM PUTTING DOWN THE JOKER THIS EVENING, WE **MUST** SURMISE THE PAIR ARE **WORKING TOGETHER**, DO WE NOT?



I'VE GOT ANOTHER THEORY, ALFRED.

WHAT DO VIRAGO, BUCKEYE, GREEN ARROW AND I HAVE IN COMMON?

MINOR PSYCHOSES AND GOD COMPLEXES, SIR?

WE'RE ALL **NON-METAHUMANS**, COMMITTED TO THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE. IF YOU HARBORED FANTASIES OF **HERO-KILLING**, YOU'D HAVE LITTLE HOPE OF TAKING DOWN **SUPERMAN** OR **WONDER WOMAN**.



BUT A NORMAL PERSON SUCH AS YOURSELF, SIR...

AND I USE THE TERM "**NORMAL**" VERY LOOSELY...

...WOULD MAKE FOR A **CONCEIVABLE** TARGET.

EXACTLY.



EVERYONE KNOWS THAT, WHEN THE JOKER'S AT LARGE, I'LL CONCENTRATE ALL MY EFFORTS ON APPREHENDING HIM.

SO MAYBE BREAKING THE JOKER OUT OF ARKHAM WAS THIS MANIAC'S WAY OF DANGLING BAIT.

I WANT YOU TO KEEP TIM AS FAR AWAY FROM THIS AS POSSIBLE, ALFRED. KEEP HIM IN THE **DARK** ON THIS ONE. BECAUSE IF MY THEORY IS CORRECT...

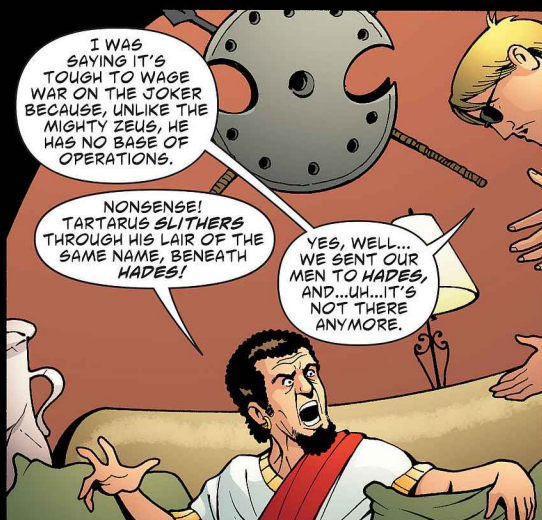


I'M BEING HUNTED.













COME JOIN US, OH MIGHTY ZEUS...

WE LIVE ONLY TO SERVE A GOD.

LET US FILL THY MOUTH WITH GRAPES...

AND OTHER STUFF, TOO.

GOIGGLEE

KOSTAS, TAKE THY LEAVE OF ME, THAT I MIGHT INDULGE THESE VIRGINS WITH THE POWER OF ZEUS!

AS YOU WISH, MY LORD.

HOW DOST THOU WISH THE MIGHTY ZEUS TO LIE WITH THEE, LADIES?

IN THE FORM OF A BULL? A SWAN?



I'VE GOTTA GET HIM BACK ON THE THORAZINE.



C'MON. WE'RE TAKING THE BOYS OUT AND TURNING OVER EVERY RAT-HOLE IN THIS TOWN 'TIL WE FIND THE JOKER.

BUT WHAT ABOUT MAXIE?

HE'S FINE. GUY'LL GRIND HIS GEARS FOR AWHILE AND SLEEP 'TIL MORNING. PHIL AND TOM ARE ON THE BALCONY, SO THE PLACE IS COVERED.





MAN...  
FOUR VIRGINS  
AT HIS BECK AND  
CALL ALL NIGHT? I  
WANNA BE A CRAZY  
DUDE WHO THINKS  
HE'S A GOD.

VIRGINS  
DON'T CHARGE  
BY THE HOUR, IF  
YOU KNOW WHAT  
I MEAN.



MMMMM...  
THY  
DELICATE  
TOUCHES  
PLEASETH  
THE MIGHTY  
ZEUS...



YES...SEND  
THY GENTLE CARESSES  
ELSEWHERE...

BUT LEAVETH  
ME ONE HAND, THAT  
I MIGHT SUCKLE  
THY THUMB.

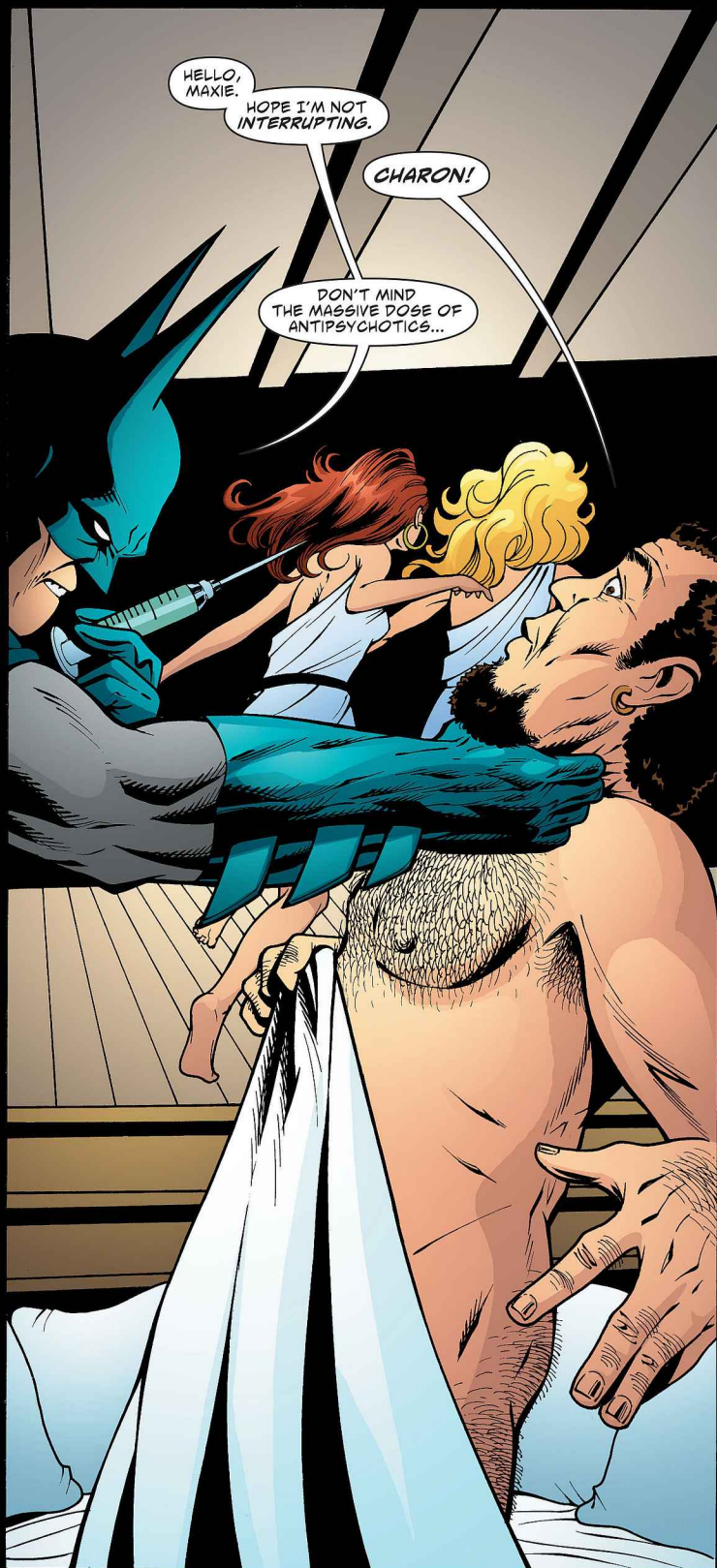


DEAR  
LADY--WHY  
DOST THOU  
WEAR A  
GLOVE TO  
MY BED?



ULK!





HELLO,  
MAXIE.

HOPE I'M NOT  
INTERRUPTING.

CHARON!

DON'T MIND  
THE MASSIVE DOSE OF  
ANTI-PSYCHOTICS...



I JUST  
NEED TO HAVE  
A LESS DIVINE  
DISCUSSION  
WITH YOU.



"AND I'VE  
ARRANGED IT  
SO WE WON'T  
BE BOTHERED."

OH MY  
GOD...

WHA...  
WHAT  
HAPPENED...  
WHERE...











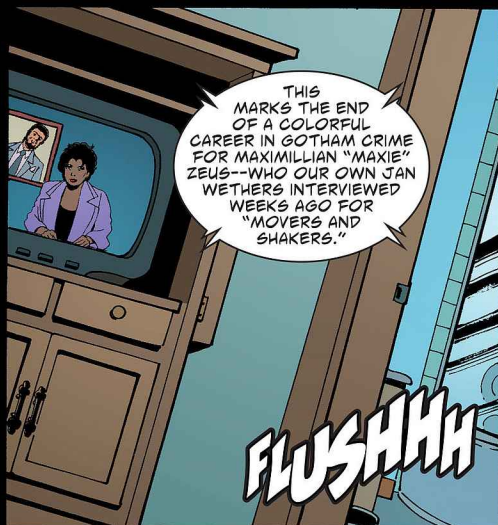




QUIET!

CAN'T YOU SEE I'M THINKING?!

SHEESH...



THIS MARKS THE END OF A COLORFUL CAREER IN GOTHAM CRIME FOR MAXIMILLIAN "MAXIE" ZEUS--WHO OUR OWN JAN WETHERS INTERVIEWED WEEKS AGO FOR "MOVERS AND SHAKERS."

FLUSHHH



NO WAY! MAXIE ZEUS GOT ARRESTED?

I'VE GOT FRIENDS WHO WERE BOOKED FOR HIM TONIGHT.

FWASSSS

"ALL I CAN DO IS MAKE THE DIFFERENCES I CAN MAKE--TO SHOW GOTHAM, AND THE WORLD, THAT I'M NOT A DRUG LORD; I'M A PHILANTHROPIST."



THAT GUY'S TOO INTO BEING THINGS, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

NOT LIKE YOU--THE GENTLE JOHN.

I ALMOST HATE TO CHARGE YOU, BUT Y'KNOW--IT'S A LIVING.

"I THINK IT'S TRAGIC THAT IN THIS, THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, THERE'S STILL RAMPANT ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION. I'M A GREEK--A FOREIGNER--SO NATURALLY, I MUST BE UP TO NO GOOD."



OH. I THOUGHT THIS WAS A HAND TOWEL. MY BAD.

"LOOK, I GET IT: I'VE HAD SOME PRETTY PUBLIC EXTENDED PSYCHOLOGICAL BREAKDOWNS."



A MASK? BABY, IF YOU WANTED TO PLAY DRESS-UP, ALL YOU HADDA DO WAS ASK.

"I'VE PAID MY DEBTS TO SOCIETY, SO TO SPEAK, AND NOW I JUST WANNA CONTINUE BUILDING THE COMPANY I LET SLIP AWAY WHILE I WAS BATTLING MENTAL ILLNESS."

FLUSHHH.

FWASSSS.





FLUSH-  
FWASS TO  
YOU TOO.

>GIGGLES

COSTUMES  
AND FUNNY NOISES?  
YOU LETTING YOUR  
PLAYFUL SIDE OUT,  
ALL OF A SUDDEN.

WELL,  
MY NEXT  
APPOINTMENT'S  
NOT 'TIL EIGHT,  
SO IF YOU WANNA  
EXPLORE YOUR  
KINKIER SIDE, I'LL  
ONLY CHARGE YOU  
HALF FOR THE  
NEXT HOUR.

WE TAKE  
YOU NOW, LIVE,  
TO GOTHAM  
CENTRAL, WHERE MAXIE  
ZEUS IS TALKING  
TO REPORTERS  
ABOUT HIS  
SURRENDER.



WHY NOW,  
MAXIE? WHY TURN  
YOURSELF IN AND  
CONFESS?

WHAT'S  
THAT? A  
KNIFE?

BABY,  
I SAID  
KINKIER, NOT  
SCARY. PUT  
THAT...



**SHHHUNNT**

BECAUSE  
I'D RATHER ROT  
IN JAIL THAN GET  
KILLED BY THE JOKER,  
THAT'S WHY. I'M NO  
DUMMY: WITH ALL THESE  
COPS AROUND, THERE'S  
NO WAY THAT CLOWN  
CAN GET ME  
NOW.

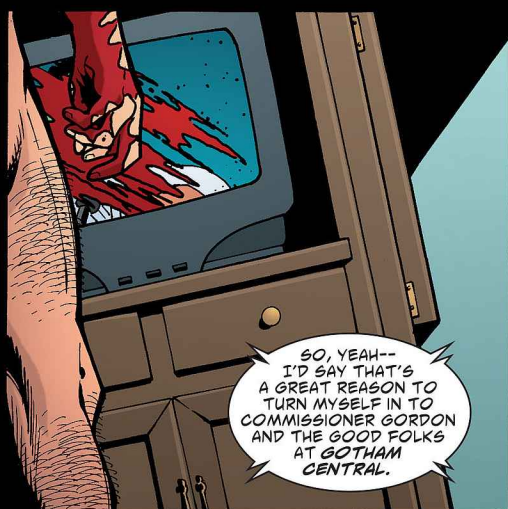


**SRUB-SRUB**

SHHHUNNT.

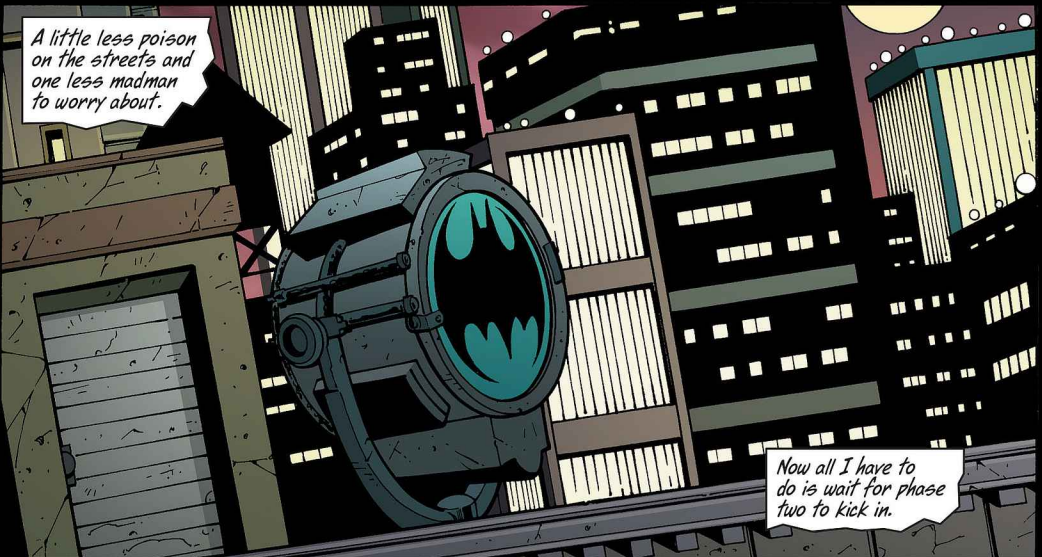
SRUB-SRUB.

AND  
ONCE THEY  
TURN ME OVER  
TO THE FEDS?  
THAT FREAK'LL  
NEVER FIND  
ME EVER  
AGAIN.




SO, YEAH--  
I'D SAY THAT'S  
A GREAT REASON TO  
TURN MYSELF IN TO  
COMMISSIONER GORDON  
AND THE GOOD FOLKS  
AT GOTHAM  
CENTRAL.










I figured the televised heavy police presence would keep him from trying to get in on the ground floor.




Which left only one way for him to get to Zeus, if he wanted him bad enough.

And I KNEW he'd want Zeus bad enough.



A doctor at Arkham once described for me the Joker's state of mind.

"Imagine trying to solve the world's most difficult math equation..."




"While you're surrounded by six televisions that sit five inches from your face..."

"All tuned to different stations..."


"All rapidly switching channels..."

"All with the volume at full blast."

"That's what it's like to be the Joker."



You'd think that'd make the Joker an unfathomable foe, impossible to figure out.

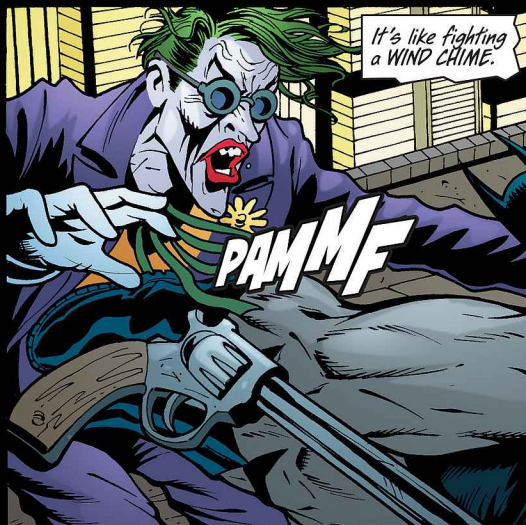


But for a capricious, homicidal psychopath with off-the-charts attention deficit disorder...













YOU  
KNOW  
WHERE  
YOU CAN  
STICK THOSE  
FINGERS OF  
YOURS?!

WHY DO I  
EVEN WASTE MY  
TIME WITH YOU  
ANYMORE? YOU'RE  
SUCH A JOKE.

I SHOULD'VE  
LET ROBIN  
HANDLE YOU  
INSTEAD.



WHO'RE  
YOU KIDDING?  
YOU LIVE FOR  
MOMENTS LIKE THIS:  
WHEN WE'RE AT  
EACH OTHER'S  
THROATS!



WHO THE  
HELL WOULD  
YOU EVEN BE  
WITHOUT YOUR  
GREATEST  
FOE?!



NUTS...

SWIFF  
SWIFF  
SWIFF



WEEEEEE!

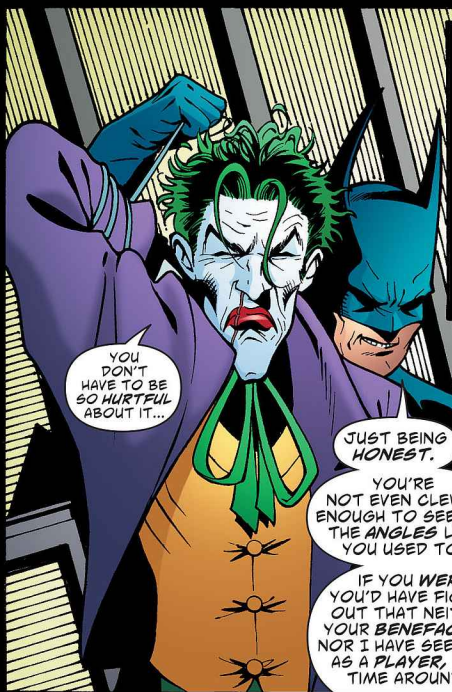


MY  
"GREATEST  
FOE"?

THERE WAS A  
TIME I CONSIDERED  
YOU MY SECOND MOST  
DANGEROUS ENEMY.  
BUT YOU'VE GONE  
SOFT, CLOWN.

NOW IT'D  
BE GENEROUS  
TO LIST YOU  
AT NUMBER  
SIXTEEN.





YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SO HURTFUL ABOUT IT...

JUST BEING HONEST.

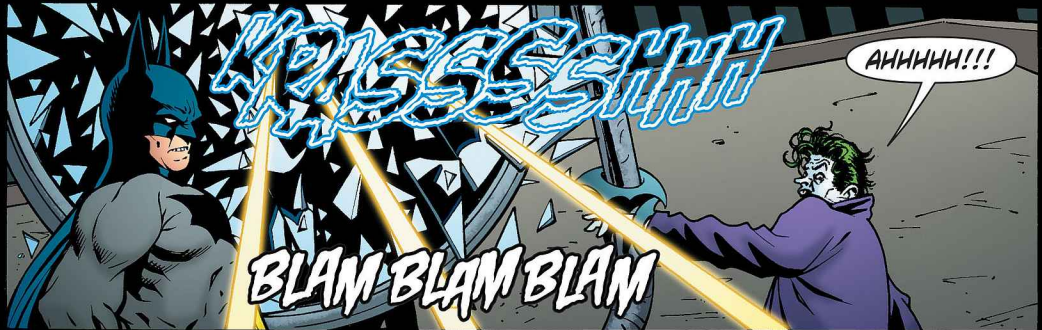
YOU'RE NOT EVEN CLEVER ENOUGH TO SEE ALL THE ANGLES LIKE YOU USED TO.

IF YOU WERE, YOU'D HAVE FIGURED OUT THAT NEITHER YOUR BENEFACTOR NOR I HAVE SEEN YOU AS A PLAYER, THIS TIME AROUND...



KA-KLINK

YOU'RE JUST BAIT.



AHHHHH!!!

BLAM BLAM BLAM



BLAM. BLAM. KRASSSSHH.

Phase three.

Right on schedule.





batman::cacophony #3 cover by ADAM KUBERT









THE ROOFTOP OF GOTHAM CENTRAL...

HEY!  
IT'S BLAM-BOY!

YO!  
BLAMMY!  
YA' CAUGHT  
ME AN' SLAPPY  
GETTIN'  
GOOFY!



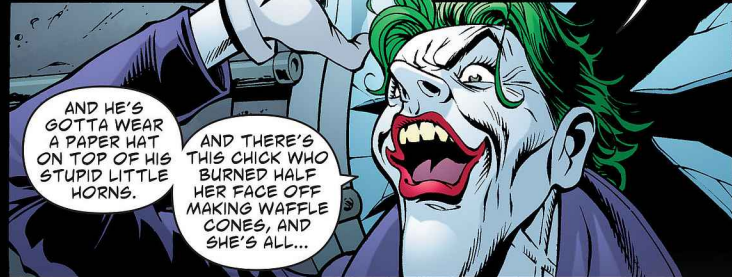
HA!  
LOOK  
AT THIS  
MOOK...

ADMIRAL  
EARNST  
ABE OF THE  
CLENCHED  
BROWN I  
DIVISON!

WOULDN'T  
YOU  
LOOOOOVE TO  
SEE HIM DROP  
THE TUFFY-  
WUFF ACT JUST  
ONCE, AND DO  
SOMETHING  
NICE 'N  
NORMAL?



LIKE WORK  
THE WINDOW  
AT A DAIRY  
QUEEN?



AND HE'S  
GOTTA WEAR  
A PAPER HAT  
ON TOP OF HIS  
STUPID LITTLE  
HORNS.

AND THERE'S  
THIS CHICK WHO  
BURNED HALF  
HER FACE OFF  
MAKING WAFFLE  
CONES, AND  
SHE'S ALL...



UHN!

SHOOT  
HIM NOW!  
SHOOT  
HIM NOW!

SHIKKEESH



BLAM





HA HA HA HA  
HA HA HA HA!





UHN!













UHN...  
UHN...

Head still ringing,  
but it'll pass.

Leg's killing me too,  
but it was worth it.



Knew I could count  
on the Joker to  
BE the Joker.

But I owe a  
bigger thanks  
to Floyd Lawton.

I "borrowed" Deadshot's helmet  
technology: the secondary armor  
beneath the Kevlar headpiece, the  
blood pack liner for that Grand  
Guignol effect.

Hate to adopt one of  
THEIR innovations,  
but hell...

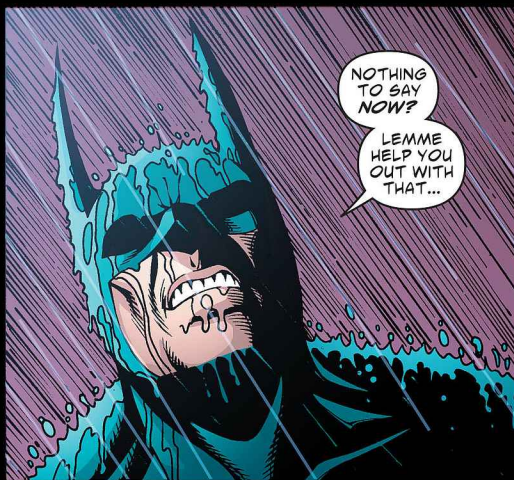
A good idea's  
a good idea.















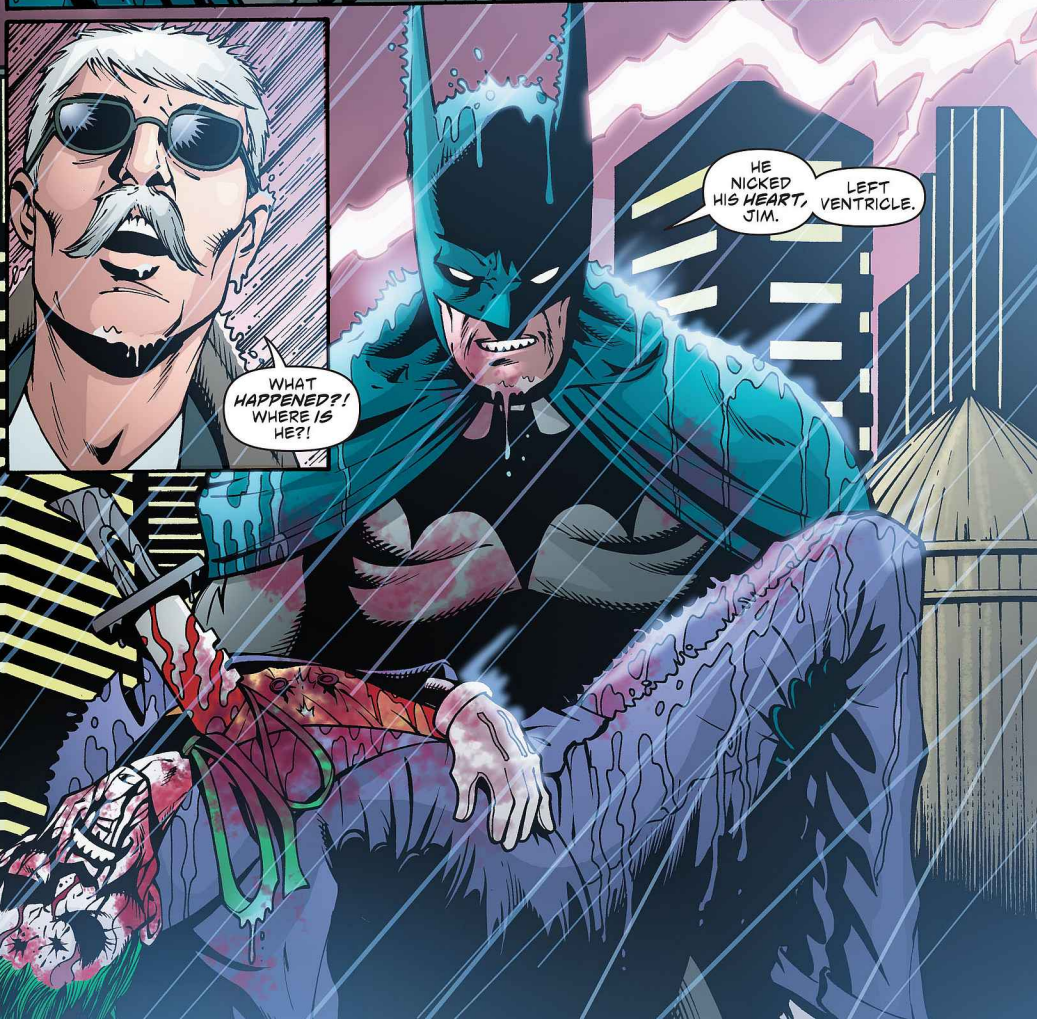




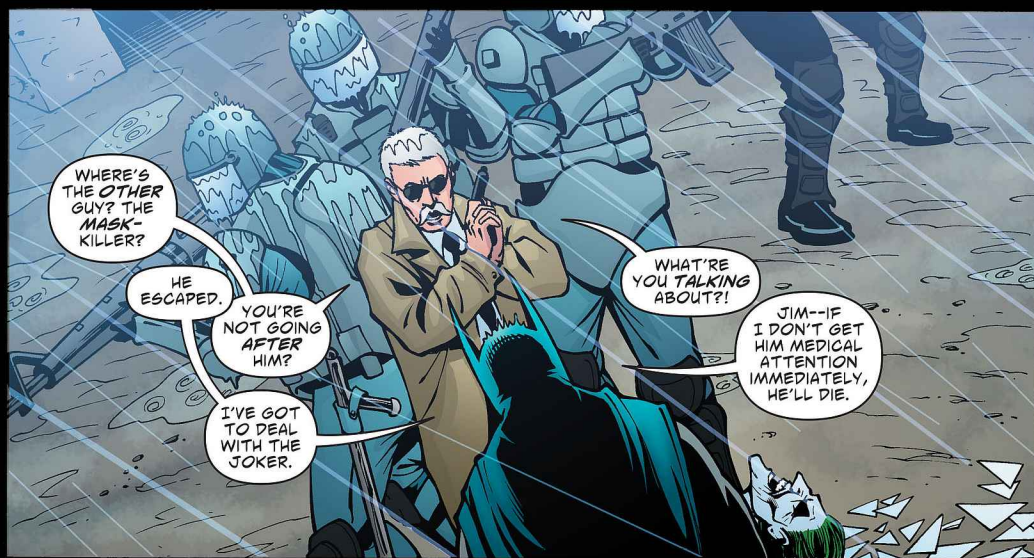
















I...I CAN'T, JIM.

IT WAS MY IDEA TO USE HIM AS BAIT. I GOT HIM STABBED.



GOOD!

JIM...

DON'T "JIM" ME! HE'S A MONSTER AND YOU KNOW IT!

HE'S A HUMAN BEING TOO!

ARE YOU SURE?!

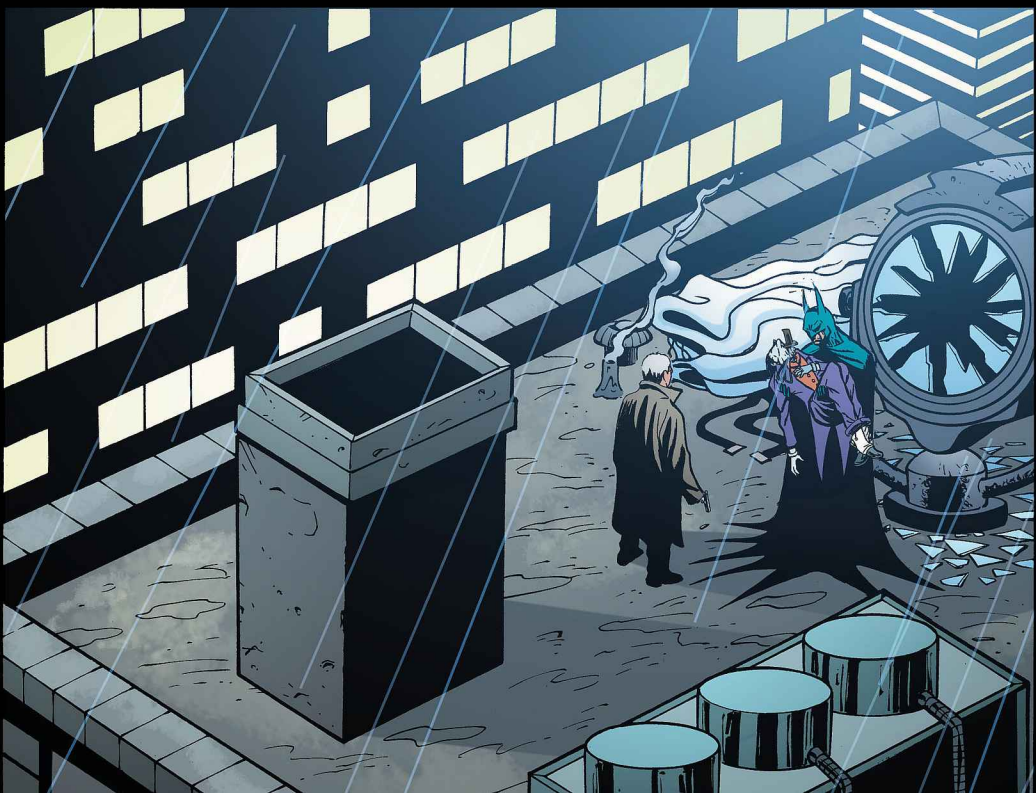
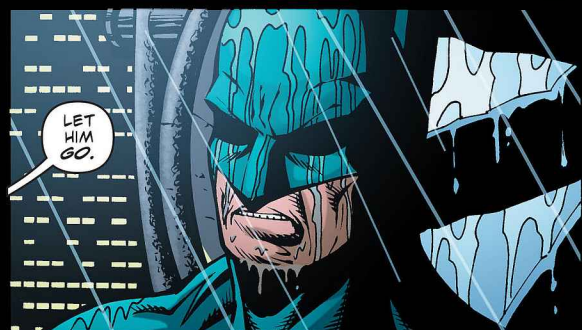


THINK OF ALL THE HORROR HE'S PUT GOTHAM THROUGH!

"WHAT HE DID TO BARBARA..."

"WHAT HE'S DONE TO YOU!"







FIVE MONTHS LATER...



GENTLEMEN, I'M FROM THE FIRM OF MALONE & MALONE. WE'VE BEEN RETAINED TO REPRESENT THE PATIENT. I UNDERSTAND HE CAME OUT OF HIS COMA THIS MORNING. AS HIS ATTORNEY, I'M ENTITLED TO SPEAK TO HIM.

THIS IS A COURT ORDER FROM A CIRCUIT JUDGE SAYING AS MUCH--GUARANTEEING ME UNDISTURBED, UNMONITORED FACE-TIME WITH MY CLIENT.

THANK YOU.



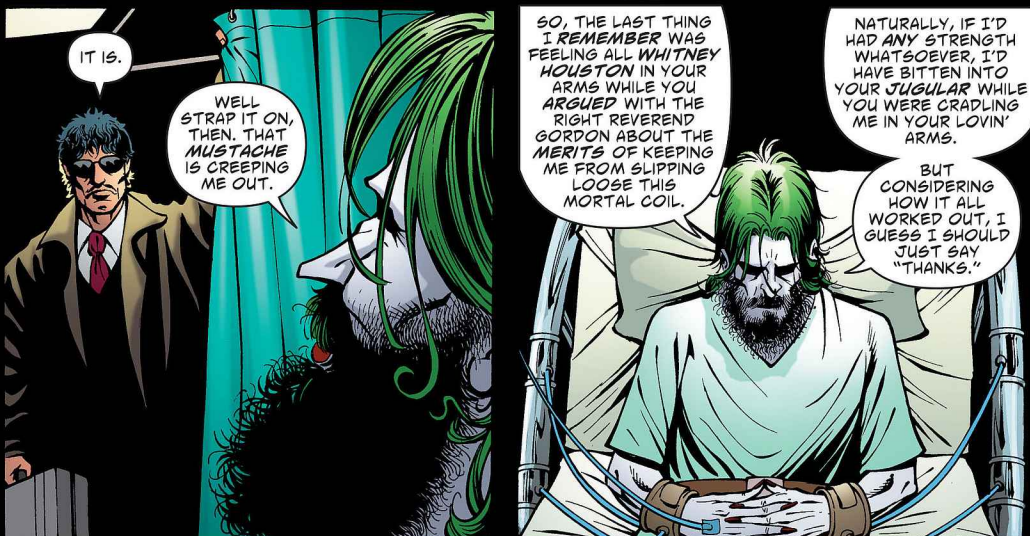




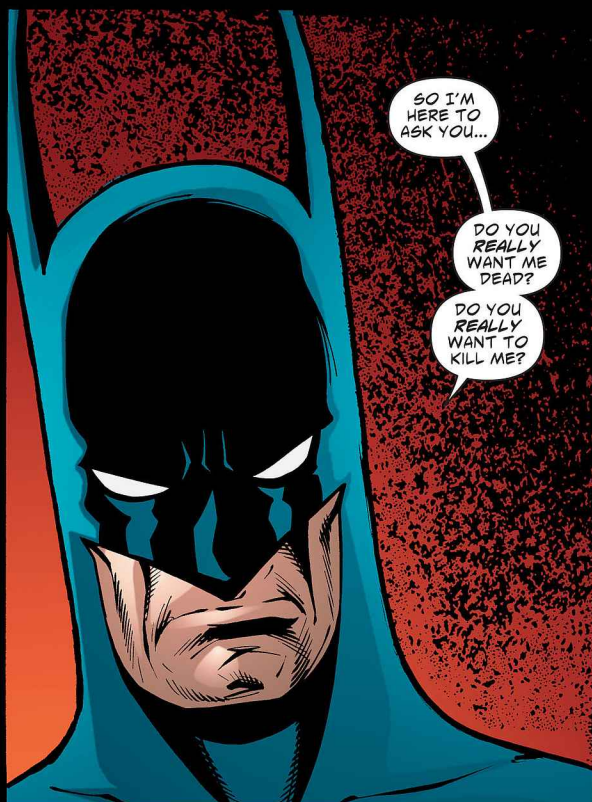














I USED TO THINK I'D BE OKAY WITH YOU DYING OR GETTING KILLED, SO LONG AS IT WASN'T BY MY HAND OR THE HANDS OF ANY OF MY ASSOCIATES.

WHEN YOU SKY-DIVED ONTO THE ROOF OF GOTHAM CENTRAL, I FANTASIZED ABOUT YOUR CHUTE MALFUNCTIONING AND YOU PANCAKING ONTO A CURB SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CITY.

BUT IN THE MOMENT OF TRUTH, WITH THAT KNIFE STICKING OUT OF YOUR CHEST?



I COULDN'T DO IT. I COULDN'T LET YOU DIE.

FOR ALL THE TRUE EVIL YOU'VE DONE, THE LIVES YOU'VE RUINED, AND THE PAIN YOU'VE INFLICTED, I COULDN'T JUST STAND THERE AND WATCH YOU BLEED OUT--EVEN THOUGH I KNEW IT MEANT GIVING UP A KIND OF PEACE I'VE NEVER KNOWN BEFORE. A KIND OF PEACE I'LL NEVER KNOW.

WHY, DO YOU THINK? WHY NOT JUST ENJOY THE ULTIMATE VICTORY?



I'VE WATCHED PEOPLE DIE BEFORE.

I SWORE THEN: NEVER AGAIN.







MY WHOLE  
LIFE...ALL  
OF THIS.

IT'S ALL  
BECAUSE I  
NEVER WANT  
TO SEE DEATH  
FIRST-HAND  
AGAIN.



INTERESTING.  
I ALWAYS  
THOUGHT YOUR  
MISGUIDED  
SENSE OF SELF-  
RIGHTEOUSNESS  
CAME FROM SOME  
PERSONAL  
TRAGEDY.

I'M SORRY  
FOR WHATEVER  
IT WAS THAT  
HAPPENED TO  
YOU WHICH MADE  
YOU THE WAY  
YOU ARE.



BUT?



BUT I DO  
WANT TO  
KILL YOU.







I IMAGINE THAT'S HARD TO HEAR, AFTER YOU JUST OPENED YOURSELF UP TO ME LIKE YOU DID.

I IMAGINE, IN YOUR HEAD, YOU SAW THIS VISIT AS A CHANCE TO WORK ON THE NATURE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WHILE I'M TEMPORARILY NOT A FROTHING-AT-THE-MOUTH, RAVING LUNATIC.

YOU PROBABLY SAW THIS VISIT AS A CHANCE FOR A NEW BEGINNING.



BUT HERE'S THE COLD, HARD TRUTH, BATS...

I DON'T HATE YOU 'CAUSE I'M CRAZY...



I'M CRAZY 'CAUSE I HATE YOU.



AND YOUR DEATH--PREFERABLY, BUT NOT NECESSARILY, BY MY HAND--WILL MEAN AN END TO MY REIGN OF TERROR IN GOTHAM.

WHEN YOU'RE GONE, I'LL STOP HURTING PEOPLE I DON'T KNOW. I'LL STOP WITH THE MAYHEM AND MURDER.

I'LL LOCK MYSELF UP IN A HOSPITAL AND RUN OUT MY CLOCK STARING AT THE WALLS, HOPPED UP ON PREMIUM GRADE PHARMACEUTICALS THAT LEAVE ME SO VIRTUALLY LOBOTOMIZED, THEY'LL HAVE TO CATHETERIZE AND COLOSTOMIZE MY HOLES TO KEEP ME FROM BECOMING A NONSTOP SELF-PISSING AND POOPING MESS.







THE CAVE...

WELL, I CAN'T SAY I'M SURPRISED BY WHAT THE JOKER SAID, MASTER BRUCE...

R

IT'S LITTLE WONDER HE CAUGHT THAT GLIMPSE, CONSIDERING YOU WEAR YOUR BRIEFS ON THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR CLOTHES.

FUNNY.

WELL, I'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF BECOMING A NIGHTCLUB COMIC.

SO DID HE.

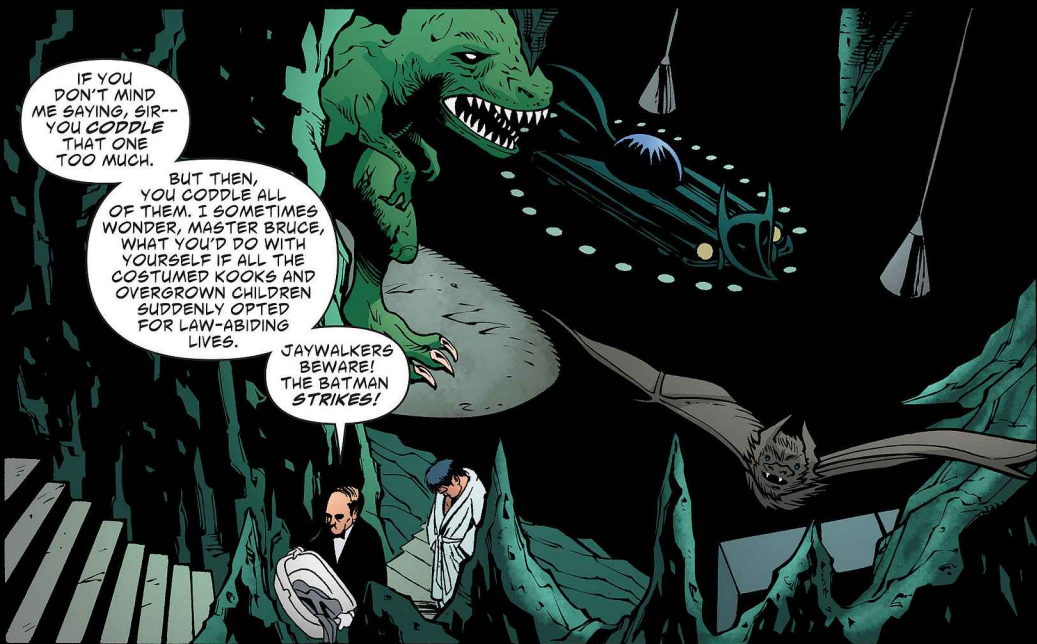
THE CLOWN'S NOT GONNA STOP 'TIL ONE OF US IS DEAD.

CERTAINLY THIS COMES AS NO SHOCK, MASTER BRUCE.

IT'S JUST... I HELD HIS LIFE IN MY HANDS. GORDON URGED ME TO LET THE JOKER BLEED OUT.

FROM WHAT HE TOLD ME TONIGHT, THAT WOULD'VE GIVEN HIM PEACE.

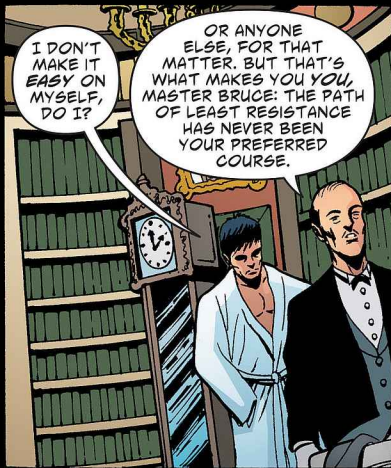




IF YOU  
DON'T MIND  
ME SAYING, SIR--  
YOU CODDLE  
THAT ONE  
TOO MUCH.

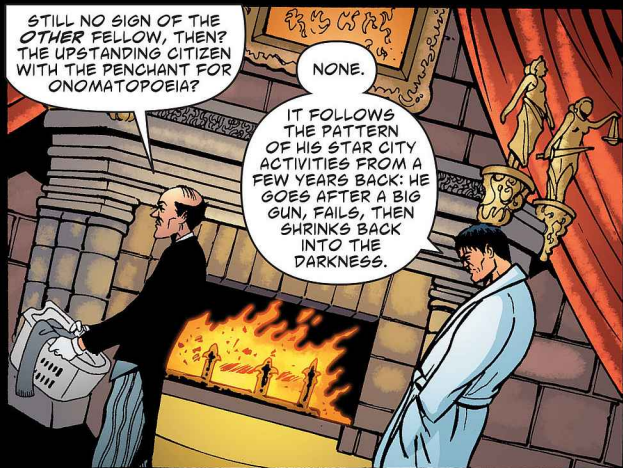
BUT THEN,  
YOU CODDLE ALL  
OF THEM. I SOMETIMES  
WONDER, MASTER BRUCE,  
WHAT YOU'D DO WITH  
YOURSELF IF ALL THE  
COSTUMED KOOKS AND  
OVERGROWN CHILDREN  
SUDDENLY OPTED  
FOR LAW-ABIDING  
LIVES.

JAYWALKERS  
BEWARE!  
THE BATMAN  
STRIKES!



I DON'T  
MAKE IT  
EASY ON  
MYSELF,  
DO I?

OR ANYONE  
ELSE, FOR THAT  
MATTER. BUT THAT'S  
WHAT MAKES YOU YOU,  
MASTER BRUCE: THE PATH  
OF LEAST RESISTANCE  
HAS NEVER BEEN  
YOUR PREFERRED  
COURSE.



STILL NO SIGN OF THE  
OTHER FELLOW, THEN?  
THE UPSTANDING CITIZEN  
WITH THE PENDANT FOR  
ONOMATOPOEIA?

NONE.

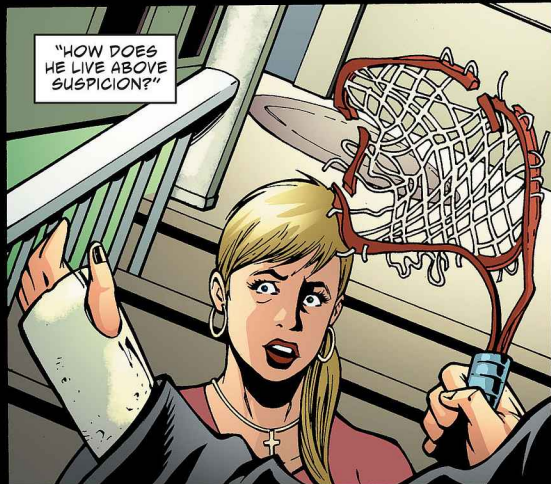
IT FOLLOWS  
THE PATTERN  
OF HIS STAR CITY  
ACTIVITIES FROM A  
FEW YEARS BACK: HE  
GOES AFTER A BIG  
GUN, FAILS, THEN  
SHRINKS BACK  
INTO THE DARKNESS.



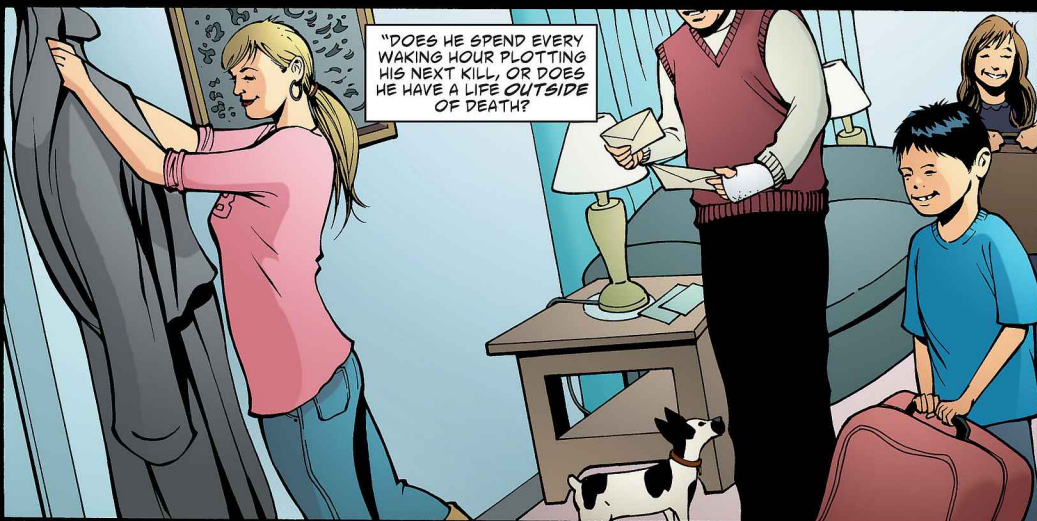
EVEN  
MONSTERS  
NEED THEIR  
REST, I  
SUPPOSE.

I JUST  
WISH I  
KNEW MORE  
ABOUT  
HIM...









"DOES HE SPEND EVERY WAKING HOUR PLOTTING HIS NEXT KILL, OR DOES HE HAVE A LIFE OUTSIDE OF DEATH?"



"HOW DOES HE RECONCILE WHAT HE DOES TO WHO HE IS?"



"AND WHEN HE'S ALONE WITH HIS THOUGHTS..."



"IS HE HONEST WITH HIMSELF?"



"DOES HE KNOW THERE'S NO PLACE HE CAN HIDE FROM HIMSELF?"



"DOES HE KNOW THERE'S NO PLACE HE CAN HIDE FROM JUSTICE?"







**Gotham City News**

# BATMAN NABS RIDDLER

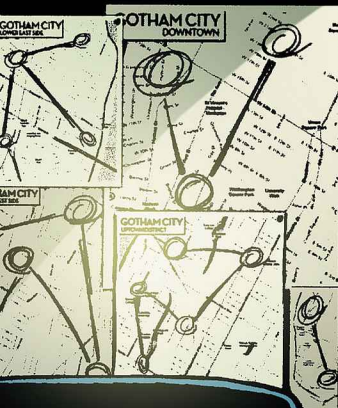


From Rags to Riches - Local Man Wins Lotto

**BAT NEWS BOMB-BOMB!**

Rare artwork and Here's C

man Halts Penguin Crime Spree



THE JURY'S OUT

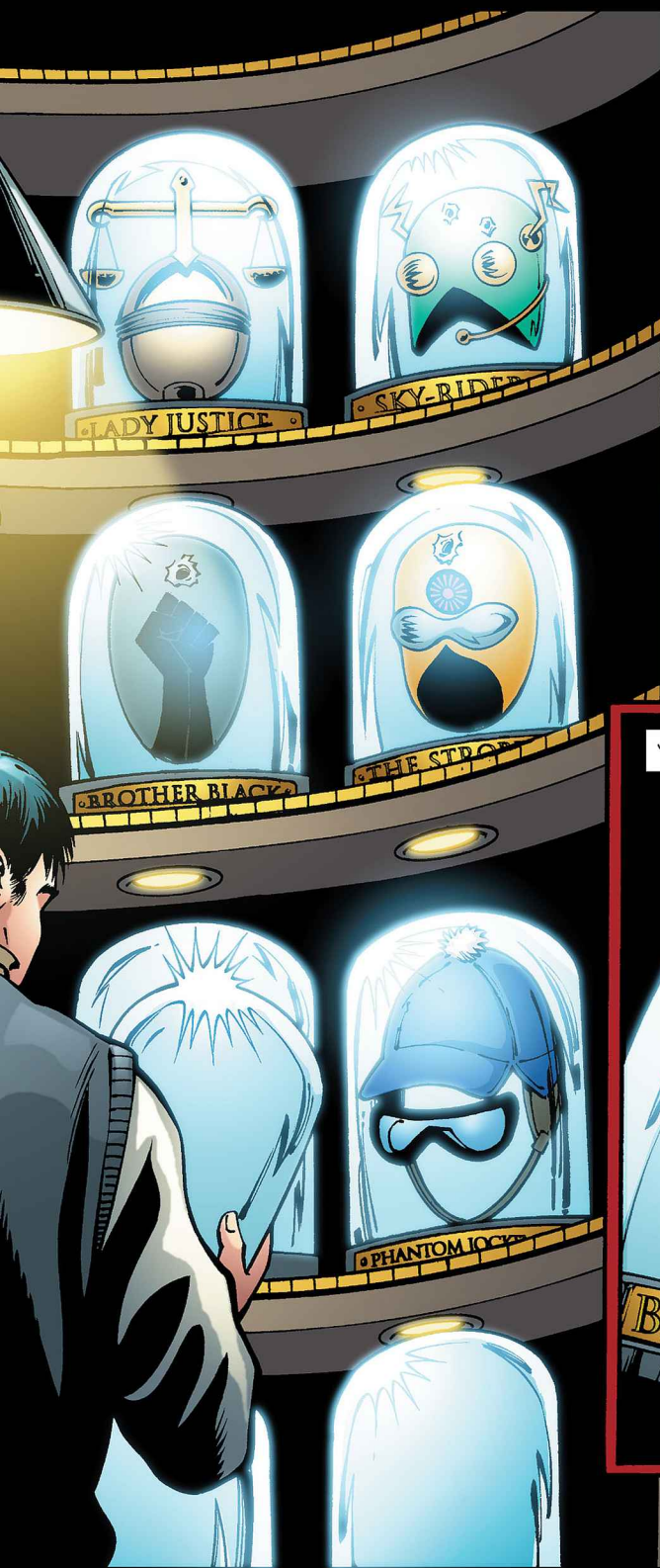
"DOES HE KNOW  
THERE'S NO PLACE  
HE CAN HIDE..."

DARK KNIGHT  
TRIUMPHANT

BATMAN?!?







THE END







FROM THE DIRECTOR OF **CLERKS** AND **CHASING AMY**

*“Entertaining” — VARIETY*

*“[Smith’s writing] is every bit as witty as his movies.” —IGN*

# BRING THE NOISE

Gotham City is a war zone — but it’s not the one-man battle the Batman envisioned when he started his crusade against crime.

An entire rogues gallery of disturbed, disfigured masterminds and mass murderers has developed around the Dark Knight. And when they come into conflict, the crossfire is deafening.

No one embodies this onslaught better than the Joker. The Clown Prince of Crime is on a rampage, determined to unseat a pretender to his bloody throne—and Batman is just as determined to put him down.

But a mysterious new player has entered the game, a masked killer intent on using this chaos and confusion to his advantage. The only sound he makes is the noise of his lethal attacks. And in the cacophony of Gotham City, Batman may not hear him coming until it’s too late...



Photo by Kevin Smith

Kevin Smith is the award-winning writer/director/producer of *Clerks*, *Chasing Amy*, *Zack and Miri Make a Porno* and other films. He also writes comic books (GREEN ARROW: QUIVER, *Daredevil*).

[dccomics.com](http://dccomics.com)

